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Sartre, Foucault and Stiegler on the Technics of Existence

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FRENCH PHILOSOPHY AND NEW MEDIA

SARTRE, FOUCAULT AND STIEGLER ON THE TECHNICS OF EXISTENCE

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I declare that I, Amélie Berger Soraruff, am the author of this thesis, and that, unless otherwise stated, I have consulted all cited references. I declare that I have completed all the work of which this thesis is a record, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree.

Amélie Berger Soraruff. Date: 05/09/2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Bernard Stiegler's revivification of the technologies of the self as an alternative to technologies of psychopower. It discusses the relevance of care as the exercise of freedom in the age of new media, which is seemingly reinforcing structures of control and surveillance.

The task of this thesis is twofold. It first offers a critical engagement with Stiegler's argument for the necessity of developing an aesthetics of the self, which I propose to do through a discussion of Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault. Second, the thesis aims to show the limits of Stiegler's technologization of the socio-cultural malaise we are confronted with. This will be principally done with the works of Sherry Turkle, Alexander Galloway and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun.

Stiegler proposes to reinstall practices of care at the core of human existence in order to minimise or escape the effects of psychopower. By psychopower, Stiegler understands the massive exploitation of consciousnesses currently facilitated by new media. I show that a reading of Sartre is necessary to understand the political resonance of this stance insofar as they both locate the possibility of freedom within the structures of consciousness. I then contrast Stiegler's reading of care with Foucault's to stress that the existential crisis diagnosed by Stiegler is a technological problem which has an aesthetic effect and deserves political attention.

I argue, however, that Stiegler's emphasis on the disastrous reality of psychopower, influenced by his reading of Foucault, leads him to overestimate the actual power of structures of control.

Through a comparison of his work with Turkle's, I show that they both portray, in their own way, technologies as the mirror of the human and thus assume an effective correspondence between technologies and the human. I then contend, by means of Galloway's work, that Stiegler's reduction of technology to its capacity to produce, diffuse and order meaning does not allow technology to be anything else than a

message. Finally, I stress with the work of Chun that this conflation of the message with the medium, already criticized by Galloway, has led, among other things, to the conflation of freedom with its technological application and may contribute to producing more paranoia and more control.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the "Loss of the Feeling of Existing"

Towards a Politics of (Self)-Consciousness:

In *What Makes Life Worth Living* and in *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, Bernard Stiegler argues for the revivification of care as a means to fight against, or escape, the current strategies of power embodied in mass media technologies and the marketing industries. This thesis intends to reunite the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault in order to examine the political relevance of the development of an aesthetics of the self in the age of new media, as proposed by Stiegler. Though Sartre, Foucault and Stiegler are coming from different philosophical backgrounds, I argue overall that their views complete one another. All three have, in their own way, acknowledged the importance of cultivating a relationship with oneself in order to preserve and consolidate a form of meaningful existence. We owe to Stiegler the emphasis on technics, to Foucault the focus on power relations, and to Sartre, his conception of the aesthetics of the self as the exercise of freedom. I intend to show that a reading of Stiegler's work in conjunction with Foucault's and Sartre's is crucial to fully understand the necessity to develop what Stiegler calls a politics of consciousness[1].

Stiegler argues that we are going through a generational malaise which is characterized by "the loss of the feeling of existing"[2] — an expression Stiegler borrows from the infamous case of Richard Durn[3].This claim caught my attention and therefore

[1] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.78

[2] see the introduction of Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: on pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press 2013)

[3] Richard Durn opened fire in 2002 at the end of a council meeting in Nanterre before committing suicide while being interrogated by the police. In a letter, Durn confesses having "lost the feeling of existing". The example of Richard Durn is symptomatic of the period of disenchantment and (self)-

constitutes the departure point of my thesis. Though short and simple in appearance, Stiegler's affirmation needs to be further unpacked in the order to understand the direction of his project. This will therefore be the object of this introduction. In the face of Stiegler's claim, two questions may legitimately arise: what is existence and what is this feeling that Stiegler talks about?

For convenience, let us assume that we are speaking of human existence and restrict our understanding to the human without discarding the possibility that other entities may or do *ek-sist*. Briefly put, to exist is to be endowed with transcendence. A thinker like Sartre insists that human beings are always in the making for they have no preceding essence, no fixed substance or given properties. He thus makes the distinction between the in-itself (*en-soi*) and the for-itself (*pour-soi*), the former designating a mode of being which is full and self-identical, whereas the latter corresponds to a mode of existence that is necessarily engaged in the world for the very reason that it is incomplete and open-ended. Hence, Sartre argues that while other entities live in the realm of immanence (the in-itself) insofar as they simply are what they are, human beings also exist for-themselves. Indeed, the human's lack of essence condemns her to find alternatives and means of compensation. Said otherwise, this ontological deficiency forces her to engage in strategies of diversion or sublimation to forget, fulfil or simply cope with that fundamental absence. Hence, to exist is to be caught in a quest for self-coincidence. In this respect, Sartre writes that what is characteristic of the human is that it is what it is not and is not what it is[4]. Behind this obscure claim lies the broader idea that to exist is to be condemned to have no other essence that the one we construct for ourselves which is always outside of ourselves.

For his part, Stiegler affirms in the first volume of *Technics and Time* that the human's lack of essence constitutes in fact its prosthetic character. To be more precise, Stiegler claims that humans have no origin, that is, no natural essence. Hence, humans do not and cannot find being inside themselves but outside themselves. This leads

disgust contemporary societies are going through: it the distressing feeling that life is not worth living, and it is precisely what Stiegler wishes to combat in reintroducing care.

[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.112

Stiegler to affirm that we are what we become[5], insofar as human beings must compensate for their lack of essential qualities in interiorizing the skills and attributes they lack. In this respect, humans are nothing less than the internalization of external elements, so that what grounds the transcendence of existence is the accumulation of acquired experiences. This empirical exteriority, which Stiegler calls 'technics', is constitutive of the human, who, by definition, *is* a technical being. To put it more succinctly; we exist in and through technics[6] and our existence is made possible by technics. Conversely, we cannot *not* be technical. While it is not the intention of this thesis to claim that Stiegler is Sartrean, two things must be taken in consideration at this stage. Firstly, Stiegler comes close to Sartre in claiming that humans do not possess a fixed essence, and secondly, Stiegler adopts the same move as his predecessor in suggesting that this absence of nature is constitutive of freedom, for it allows and condemns humans to act out in the world[7].

But what have we learnt so far in relation to the so-called loss of the feeling of existing? We have learnt that the human's default[8] of being is a fact and that this ontological default (or originary lack) generates existence. As such, it is important to stress that Stiegler's claim could not possibly be about the collapse of existence, for he argues that we *never* cease to exist.

If we go back to our reading of *What Makes Life Worth Living*, Stiegler writes further down in the text that the loss of the feeling of existing shall in fact be understood as the loss of the feeling that "life is worth living[9]". Read from this

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[5] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. by Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.48

[6] see the introduction of *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Gerald Moore and Christina Howells (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013)

[7] Christina Howells, ''Le défaut d'origine: The Prosthetic Constitution of Love and Desire', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.139

[8] Stiegler uses the term "default" to refer to the human's lack of origin. Default/*défaut* (which appears sometimes as de-fault in the English translation) also means "failure", "mistake", "deficiency" or "defect". Richard Beardsworth and George Collins write in a footnote to the first volume of *Technics and Time*: "The concept *défaut* in fact marks a strategy in Stiegler's work which addresses, through the concomitant reflection on the originary relation between the technical and the human, the question of finitude within and across diverse fields of human thought and practice". See footnote, Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1998) p.280

[9] Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: on pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press 2013) p.4

perspective, one could answer that if the generational malaise pointed out by Stiegler does not concern the collapse of existence, it may well concern that of values, as the presence of the word "worth" suggests. One would have every reason to believe so; Stiegler has on many occasions built his argument around the worldwide adoption of American values, spread by, according to him, the compelling aura of Hollywood, to point at the uniformization and the subsequent impoverishment of culture. The Americanization of the world, says Stiegler, has led to the synchronization (or uniformization) of thought and therefore to its decline, insofar as thought can only be renewed, stimulated and displaced through a diachronic exchange, that is, through alterity. As such, the effects of globalization are disastrous because alterity is progressively effaced and diversity eliminated[10]. What is at stake with globalization is the fact that the United States stands out in the political game as "the lone global superpower[11]" which seems to have no serious opponents. This last point may be debatable[12], but Stiegler argues overall that the political agenda of the United States of America is to ideologically and psychologically dominate Europe and other parts of the world through the widespread dissemination of images devoted to America's greatness.

> During the 1930s and 1940s America used cinema, as it continues to do today, as an instrument of psychological, ideological, and commercial warfare. In this war of images, in the course of which America was also struggling against German Nazism and then Soviet communism, its goal was to ensure that the entire world would adopt the *American Way of Life.* Adopting this lifestyle meant behavior modification and revised representations, consumption habits, and relational models, making the entire world "vibrate" in expectation of a carefully structured story (in numerous installments), from *Gone with the Wind* to *Apollo IJ* by way of Chaplin's Little Tramp, the Western, Ronald Reagan, and *Dances with Wolves:* the *adventures* of American cinema. Beginning with Hollywood images, then with multi-episode television series, America has become *the* modern country par excellence, and the dream of all emigrants[13].

[10] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. by Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.116
[11] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. by Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.116
[12] Nowadays, the United States may find in China a serious rival, for example. But in Stiegler's defence, I am here referring to the claims he made in the third volume of *Technics and Time*, originally published in 2001.
[13] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.116

In this respect, cinema plays a crucial role as an apology of consumerism and more largely of democratic liberalism. With the rise of the cinematic age (which includes cinema and more largely new media technologies), capitalism seems to have left the domain of finance to regulate not simply the market, but various aspects of culture. In other words, it has become a lifestyle and, more problematically, a system of thought. It has penetrated the libidinal, argues Stiegler, to channel and manipulate desires. For Stiegler, such cultural capitalism is dangerous for it reduces symbols to effects and turns brands into new symbols. By symbols, Stiegler means objects, icons and other kind of supports that sediment and contribute to the diffusion of social and cultural memory[14] [15].This phenomenon is characteristic of what he calls symbolic misery. Such regressive aesthetics, Stiegler says, constitute a major cultural crisis insofar as individuals, and more specifically children who are more vulnerable to the effects of images, are encouraged to identify themselves "not with parents, nation or any idealized object but with merchandise and brand names[16]". Consumerist values vampirise individuals and contribute to the loss of individuation, insofar as brands and merchandises are not capable of transmitting meaningful symbols [17]. The individual is reduced to its function of consumer, accumulating objects which in turn only intensify his or her sensation of emptiness. The reason for this is that these objects are not designed to resonate with the wants of ontological singularity but satisfy the demands of particularity; as such they do not target persons but profiles. In this situation of symbolic misery, the individual is frustrated and at loss as to how to reconnect with herself.

[14] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.6

[15] In a more specific way, Stiegler defines the symbol as the "secondary and tertiary retentions of the 'We'". Secondary retentions refer to the individual's memory, that is, the recollection of past experiences, whereas tertiary retentions such as the alphabet, the book or a gramophone are the externalization of memory in traces and objects. Tertiary retentions enable the transmission of symbols for example. As such, Stiegler consider them to be symbolic media.
Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.87-88.

[16] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.62

[17] To better understand the correlation between symbols, ideals objects and the formation of the individual, one will need to dig further to Stiegler's account of psychoanalysis, which I will cover more specifically in the chapter dedicated on Turkle.

Having said all this, Stiegler's argument does not simply revolve around the collapse of meaningful values, but unpacks the consequences of this shift for the formation of the self. Indeed, what seems to worry Stiegler is the impossibility for us to appropriate our identity insofar as it has become the object of commercial targeting. The standardization of values and habits, he argues, leads to a standardization of modes of individuation. On a larger scale, it appears that what Stiegler deplores is the lethal homogenization of subjectivity. Yet the loss of the feeling of existing is a claim about existence, not about the subject or subjectivity; existence does not simply equate to subjecthood. Stiegler is not trying to revivify the classical notion of the subject as an abstract philosophical category, for example. His interest lies elsewhere. To better understand his contribution, let me go back to the problem of Americanization. Stiegler claims that American-led globalization homogenizes modes of identity formation and produces a false sense of cohesion through the glorification of merchandise. Yet, one could reply that such stance is not particularly new or original, and may even well appear as a bit of a cliché. In fact, Stiegler's account of the industrialization/marketization of culture finds a strong resonance with what the Frankfurt School has denounced as the culture industry. Adorno explains for example that mass culture is supported by industries of entertainment which aim to amuse their audiences. As such, mass culture, far from being benign, has toxic effects on individuals because it encourages social regression through the excessive consumption of goods that are designed to respond to consumer needs. For Adorno, the fetishization of the object leads to the to the dissolution of the subject. In this respect, entertainment is a hollow ideology that feeds on despair[18].

At this stage, one may be puzzled about the necessity to bring the contributions of the Frankfurt School into the discussion, insofar as this thesis concerns Sartre, Foucault and Stiegler and that I haven't yet justified the relevance of their presence. I am doing it because Stiegler is confronted with the same criticism I have just pinpointed, namely, that his view does not seem to differ from what has already been formulated by

[18] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford California; Stanford University Press, 2002) p.123

Horkheimer and Adorno. In a series of interviews with Élie During, Stiegler defends his position as follows:

> What limits Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis is that in denouncing the process of the technical exteriorisation of the imagination, they fail to explain why consciousness can be so highly penetrated and controlled by the unfolding of a movie or a temporal object in general[19].

In order to better express the significance of the "temporal object[20]" on the psychological formation of the individual, Stiegler finds it crucial to go back to Husserl. The latter has demonstrated that a temporal object is "one whose flow coincides with the flux of consciousness" and that "only exists with the passage of time[21]". A melody is a temporal object for example and is "woven of retentions and protentions[22]". Consciousness functions through a dual retentional and protentional dynamic. The retentional process consists in conserving elements (notes or images for example) in the now of consciousness, whereas protentions are "the anticipation of the unity of conditions of the flux still to come[23]". To put it more simply, retentions form a 'just past' that grounds the possibility of a future[24]. As such, retentions and protentions are essential in the fabricating of the present. The main problem, argues Stiegler, is that "today, the flux of consciousness of which we are constituted increasingly follows the rhythms and warp of mass-produced temporal objects[25]".

Hence, the loss of the feeling of existing is not just symptomatic of the dissolution of subjectivity, but of something more profound which is that of the generalized synchronization of the temporal flow of consciousnesses[26].

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[19] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.96
[20] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.96
[21] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.96
[22] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.96
[23] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.59
[24] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.44
[25] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.97
[26] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.97

However, Stiegler has not yet explained *why* the synchronization of consciousnesses is problematic. Having mentionned Husserl and the key role of consciousness in the formation of the individual, one may have a clearer idea of how I intend to insert Sartre in the map. Stiegler explains that in order to fight the standardization of the retentional and protentional processes of consciousness, which concerns more largely the uniformization of imagination and memory, we need to develop a politics of consciousness. In other words, we need to find the tool to reappropriate the conditions of our psychological formation. Here lies indeed the whole perversity of what Stiegler calls psychopower; mass media are not simply influencing the desires, tastes and dreams of the already-formed individual, they are conditioning the very structures of psychic life that enables the formation of identity. Hence, Stiegler argues that technologies of psychopower, in targeting consciousness, are dislodging the very possibility of human freedom[27]. As he argues: "freedom is the act of consciousness par excellence[28]". In this respect, Stiegler does sound very Sartrean. Like Sartre, Stiegler also suggests that it is because freedom is always threatened and yet irreducible to the human, that one must cultivate a relationship with oneself. However, Stiegler does not mention Sartre and though he seems to present freedom as both an ontological necessity and a duty to achieve, he does not explicitly and fully elaborate on that. The theme of freedom is present in his work as its subtext or discussed hastily for the demands of an interview, but is not tackled at length by Stiegler. One of the possible reasons for that may be Stiegler's reluctance to put back a self-determining consciousness at the center of his work. For Stiegler, the formation of consciousness is enabled and depends on technics. To privilege the role of consciousness in the transcendent formation of the individual would be taking the risk to return to a humanistic vision of the subject as the measure of all things. Yet, Stiegler is clear. We are not the masters of our own consciousness, which is the very reason why we must take care of that consciousness. The importance of care will be developed later in this thesis. At this stage, suffice to say that Stiegler does acknowledge the fundamental role of consciousness in the exercise of human freedom, even though the transcendantality of consciousness relies on a prior empirical base which is that of

[27] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.77
[28] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.77

technics[29]. The purpose of the chapter on Sartre, which will initiate my inquiry, is to develop what Stiegler's work has not developed so far: the necessity of freedom as a fact to be recognized and a goal to be pursued. My intention is not to point out one of Sartre's possible successes to better emphasizes one of Stiegler's failures. Instead, I am implying that a Sartrean legacy is already in effect in Stiegler's work. In other words, I suggest that it is worth shedding light upon this legacy as it would enable Stiegler to make a stronger connection between human freedom and the political urge of reinvesting our identity.

Stiegler and Foucault: An Archaeology of Reflexivity

With the inclusion of Husserl and Sartre, it seems so far that I am going down a phenomenological route, which may be enriching on some level but seems completely at odds with Foucault's project. This difficulty is what I would like to address now. I will also momentarily leave aside ontological considerations on existence, as I believe that this has been sufficiently elucidated so far, to turn to the question of *feeling*.

Foucault's work is said to have gone through three significant periods. The archaeological period starts from 1963 to 1969 and notably includes *The Archeology of Knowledge*, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things*. The genealogical period encompasses the body of work produced between 1970 and 1976 such as *The Order of Discourse*, *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. The last period which starts from 1984 and is much more controversial, focuses on the history of subjectivity and includes the two following volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. For personal convenience, I am not going to mention the fourth volume (*Les aveux de la chair*) that has just been published in February 2018 by Gallimard. Considering that Foucault was against posthumous publication[30], it is unclear to me how and to what extent this work should fit in his overall project and if

[29] Stephen Barker, 'Techno-pharmaco-genealogy', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.268
[30] Stuart Elden, 'Review: Michel Foucault, Histoire de La Sexualité 4: Les Aveux de La Chair', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 35 (2018) 293–311

it can be considered as a canon. To go back to my chronological account of Foucault, I would add that while the archaeological and genealogical inquiries implied the examination of specific periods of History such as the Middle Ages and the 19th century, Foucault's later interest for the subject brought him back to the Greco-Roman Antiquity. This shift has puzzled many scholars and seems to stand in contradiction with the critical project that Foucault has developed so far. Let me explain this point further.

In his archaeological period, Foucault intended to question the conditions of possibility of knowledge, hence renewing the Kantian question, while at the same time, taking his distance from Kant. The question of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge, argues Foucault, cannot be answered with Kantian terms insofar as Kant starts from the perspective of human faculties, that is, the schematism[31], and therefore cannot escape the anthropological account of knowledge. Foucault attempts to correct Kant's mistake by putting the stress on the historical a priori as the new definer of the conditions of possibility for knowledge to form itself according to an epoch. Hence, Foucault adopts an anti-humanistic discourse insofar as he rejects the subject (whether empirical or transcendental) as the key founder of experience[32]. Archeology comes close to phenomenology insofar as the latter challenges Kantian idealism which grounds the possibility of experience in the pre-existence of pure categories. The phenomenological method achieves this through its conception of the intentionality of consciousness which states that consciousness is always the consciousness *of* something. This means that consciousness is necessarily transcendent and tied with the exteriority of the object. Foucault's archaeology takes issue with phenomenology, especially that of Husserl, for it still takes the I of consciousness as its main departure point. But not every phenomenologist assumes the existence of a transcendental ego in the manner of the late Husserl. In fact, Sartre will be critical of Husserl for this precise reason. Yet, Foucault believes that phenomenology cannot completely break

[31] The schema is the unification of understanding and intuition, which is achieved independently from experience. For Kant, mathematics and geometry provides a convincing model for schematism as the possibility to formulate synthetic a priori judgments, that is, ideal forms of reasoning. It is to assume innate rational/cognitive faculties to the human. Stiegler tackles the issue by showing, for example, that mental calculation is originally possible by counting on one's fingers, the same way the slave in Plato's Meno first makes sense of a geometrical form by tracing a figure in the sand. Hence, even our innermost rational faculties (such as the intuition of time and space) depend on technics.

[32] see Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford, California; Stanford University Press, 2002)

away from the transcendental subject. Hence, the archeological method intends to historicize as much as possible this transcendental residue.

The genealogical inquiry intends for its part to continue the critical question of Kant in examining the production of regimes of truths and the effects of power in the constitution of knowledge. Once again, the subject remains subordinated to the discursive. For example, Beatrice Han summarizes Foucault's journey as the "passage from an archaeological interrogation of the conditions under which a subject can speak the truth, to the genealogical claim that truth is per se the major condition of possibility for the construction of the self as subject[33]". In this respect, the object of Foucault's genealogical inquiry seems now to be double for it both analyzes the conditions of possibility for truth to be produced and the effects of these games of truth. But Foucault's work takes a new turn when he decides to explore the ethics of subjectivation. This sudden interest goes against the archaeo-genealogical approach of his earlier investigations[34]. Indeed, subjectivation (in contrast with the disciplinary mode of subjection) refers to the reflective elaboration of the self in which the subject is understood as spontaneously free and self-constitutive. It did not take long for Foucault scholars to sense a major difficulty, which is the following: to present the subject as *self*-constitutive is to assume the existence of an originary selfhood. Put otherwise, it is to make the subject the agent of her own creation. As such, this position reactivates the conceptual viability of transcendental subjectivity that one has already encountered in Kant's subject of apperception or in Husserl's transcendental ego of consciousness. Yet, as has been mentioned, Foucault's archaeo-genealogy has put a lot of efforts into coming to terms with transcendental subjectivity.

This paradox of the process of self-constitution by the self is largely known and has been notably tackled by Deleuze[35]. What I would like to suggest for my part is that Foucault's insistence on the relation to oneself can elucidate the notion of

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[33] Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford, California; Stanford University Press, 2002) p.10

[34] Peter dews, 'The return of the subject in late Foucault', *Radical Philosophy* (spring 1989), pp. 37-41.

[35] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand, Minneapolis (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1988)

feeling that Stiegler is talking about. Indeed, Foucault's examination of the Greco-Roman practices of subjectivation "reveals the structure of the relationship of recognition[36]" as the key element to the process of identification. As such self-constitution does not start with a prior self, but more specifically, with a reflexive relation, essential to the process of subjectivation. Hence, the cultivation of this reflexive relation is at the center of the ethics of care. The fact that Stiegler refers to the late Foucault, that is, the Foucault who has put the relation to oneself at the center of his research, is not innocent or accidental. It proves that what Stiegler understands as the loss of the feeling of existing is the loss of the self-reflexive relation to oneself which is essential to the practice of care, that is, the process of individuation. Though Stiegler uses the word feeling, he is not talking about an emotion or a sentiment. He is hinting at our very capacity to connect with ourselves, to be capable of self-awareness.

Stiegler's philosophy of technics borrows a lot from the phenomenological method, but also flirts with anthropology and sociology. The aim, as Stiegler puts it, is to develop and archaeology of reflexivity[37]. Like Foucault, Stiegler finds himself confronted with the transcendental perspective, which he intends to surpass, not just in historicizing, but also in *technicizing* the process of subjectivation. Hence, if Stiegler puts a certain emphasis on consciousness, the individual and the necessity of freedom, he also bypasses the problem of pure transcendentalism in transposing the transcendental onto the empirical basis of technics[38]. To be more precise, Stiegler's key contribution in relation to Sartre and Foucault is to claim that consciousness itself is always already technical. As such, the history of subjectivity always implies at its very core the history of technics[39] insofar as the two are concomitant. However, it is technics that allows the emergence of the conscious human, not the reverse.

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[36] Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford, California; Stanford University Press, 2002) p.178.
[37] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1998) p.140.
[38] Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in *Technics and Time*', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) pp. 53-68.
[39] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time; Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) p.2

In this thesis, Foucault appears as an intermediary who enables me to draw connections between Sartre and Stiegler from the angle of the aesthetics of self-constitution. If Sartre put the stress on freedom as the necessary departure point of the project of existence, Foucault displaces the issue in turning the aesthetics of existence into a practice of power in which freedom appears as its normative derivative.

I will show in the first chapter that Sartre's reading of self-therapeutics, though enlightening on many aspects, fails to fully detach itself from an egological enterprise in which the other is a threat to one's spiritual conversion. In the second chapter, I will point out that Foucault's positive acknowledgement of the co-expansion of the individual and her social environment throws the aesthetics of existence into the political domain and locates the possibility of self-formation not in the subject herself but in the surrounding network of the individual in which the latter is complicit. The third chapter will be dedicated to Stiegler's philosophy of technics and will offer a particular focus on his reappropriation of Foucault's work. Stiegler presents the disciplinary power of old institutions as a viable system of care insofar as the institutional model (such as the school) enables the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and consolidates a sentiment of community, essential to the process of individuation. In this respect, Stiegler's account of care differs from Foucault's insofar as he explicitly turns the ethos of self-formation into an educative measure dependant on the institutional model of the school and in which the adults assume the responsibility to take care of the younger generation. Overall, Stiegler suggests that not only that care is political, but that it *should* reinvent the political[40].

[40] Martin Crowley, 'The Artist and the Amateur, from Misery to Invention', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Gerald Moore and Christina Howells (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) pp. 119-134

A Paranoid Model of Psychopower?

Here are the key points to remember; for Stiegler it is not so much that we do not exist, that we cease to exist or that we are not capable of producing new forms of existence, insofar as it is not existence itself that is lost but its *feeling*. Hence, the loss of the feeling of existing is not symptomatic of a collapse of existence, nor is it collapse of selfhood or subjectivity, but a collapse of self-awareness. As such, the challenge is to restore a self-reflexive relation with oneself and to fight against the destructive side of technologies that have plunged individuals into a critical state of disaffection. Stiegler thus proposes to reactivate care as a technique of the self and as a new disciplinary norm.

While the first part of this thesis will show sympathy to Stiegler's ethico-political appropriation of care as a meaningful technique of existence, it will be the aim of the second part to point out the limits of such argument, which offers an unfair account of new media technologies. Hence, after having explained in what the loss of the feeling of existing consists for Stiegler, I would like to focus on its cause, namely, psychopower. Stiegler writes:

> The future of the planet must be thought from the question of psychopower characteristic of control societies, the effects of which have become massive and destructive. Globalized psychopower is the systematic organization of the capture of attention made possible by the psychotechnologies that have developed with radio (1920), television (1950) and digital technologies (1990). It has spread across the surface of the planet via several forms of networks, producing a constant industrial channeling of attention, and resulting in a new phenomenon: a massive destruction of attention, referred to by nosologists in the United States as 'attention deficit disorder'. This destruction of attention is a particular, and particularly severe, case of the destruction of libidinal energy through which the capitalist libidinal economy is destroying itself[41].

As one may already suspect, Stiegler's model of psychopower echoes directly to Foucault's conception of biopower. While biopower designates the institutional apparatuses aiming at the government of bodies, psychopower refers to a set of mass media and marketing strategies which intend to penetrate the structures of psychic life.

[41] Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: on Pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press 2013) p.81

Under the grip of psychopower, individuals are constituted as consumers[42] and are not capable to appropriate their own freedom in the sense that freedom is before all a freedom to think[43]. Behind the worldwide adoption of consumerist values and the identification to commodities, Stiegler hints at a general attitude of irresponsibility and immaturity. To his mind, this mental state of disaffection is not simply encouraged but provoked by new technologies which are in turn subordinated by the exigencies of economic powers, that is, of capitalism as a whole. However, it is unclear if these economic powers act as a transversal or a supra-archaic force; if it is the source of psychopower or its effect.

Though it seems from this angle that, for Stiegler, power originates already in power, and hence his philosophy appears to give rise despite itself to a metaphysics of power. I will explain later that it is this overestimation of the power of power that is precisely problematic and that needs to be deconstructed. For the moment, I believe that it is important to note once again that for Stiegler, we are not simply confronted with cultural industries that are *influencing, altering* and *modifying* the individuation process; we are confronted with programming industries that are *conditioning*, *configuring* and *manipulating* the process of the inscription of subjectivity. Though we cannot escape this technical conditioning in virtue of our lack of essence, we must develop alternatives techniques of individuation in order not to be reduced to a consumer, a profile or a collection of data. This urge to find "new weapons[44]" is a direct reference to Deleuze's 'Postscript on Control Societies' of which Stiegler's two volumes of *Symbolic Misery* intend to be a form of continuation. I won't have the opportunity to dig in further details Deleuze's influence on Stiegler thought. Instead, I will trace back Stiegler's account of control to Foucault's understanding of panoptic power and show how the Foucauldian legacy has been received in the field of new

[42] Sophie Fuggle, 'Stiegler and Foucault: The politics of Care and Self-writing', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.195

[43] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.78

[44] Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery; The Katastrophè of the Sensible*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Cambridge; Polity Press, 2015) p.5

media, especially in the works of the three theorists I chose to examine, namely, Sherry Turkle, Alexander Galloway and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun.

What differentiates Stiegler's model of psychopower from Foucault's biopower is the following: biopower intends to control the population as a "producing machine" while psychopower aims to control that population as a "consuming machine"[45]. In addition, strategies of biopower intend to model one's behavior, whereas strategies of psychopower aim to create (or program) one's motivations[46]. In both cases, we are dealing with an apparatus of control, which is invisible, sprawling and menacing. Yet, Stiegler's portrayal of psychopower appears to me problematic for it is essentially conceived through the scope of control and (to a lesser extent) of surveillance. Such emphasis denotes not simply a Foucauldian influence, but a panoptical understanding of systems of control which is anachronistic and inaccurate. This point will be further elaborated at the beginning of the second half of the thesis.

Though Stiegler suggests that Foucault's model of biopower is insufficient to describe adequately the governance of the temporal flow of consciousness at play with the emergence of programming industries, he does not call into question his input on control and surveillance, as if the coupling of control and surveillance is condemned to remain an invariable principle in the paradigm of power. To be fair, Stiegler has expressed some doubts about the effectivity of control and has nuanced its magnitude; the synchronization of consciousnesses which leads to the standardization and regression of the collective psychic life, does not impact people in the same way or in the same degree. In other words, Stiegler suggests that the individual's vulnerability to psychopower depends largely on her social background. Indeed, the world has become increasingly polarized between those who have access to culture and those who do not[47]. This point constitutes already in itself a major political problem. For the

[45] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.131
[46] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.132
[47] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.86

purpose of this work I won't dig further into this issue as this does not constitute the focal point of my argument. Yet, I would like to stress that, for Stiegler, a culture of singularities is still possible and in effect. Besides, Stiegler does not spontaneously use the term "surveillance" unless he is discussing Foucault's conception of biopower and rather prefers the Deleuzian term of vigilance[48]. However, that does not make him less pessimistic in his account of psychopower, which he believes, will always have the final say in the battle for intelligence[49]. As such, psychopower remains a threat which is more or less efficient depending on the techniques of attention the individual has been exposed to so far, and control is still a fact to be dealt with.

Though my thesis does not intend to minimize the political reality of psychopower, I am less assertive than Stiegler about the effectivity of the structures of control. Hence, I argue in the second part of the thesis that the Foucauldian-Deleuzian paradigm of power and control does not adequately describe the protocological system we are embedded in. Less than a cross-over with the field of new media, the second half of this thesis proposes to confront Stiegler's philosophy of technology with more concrete examples, whether these examples include the companionship of robots as developed by Turkle, the effect of the network in the case of Galloway or the actuality of systems of control as discussed in the last chapter with the work of Chun.

Chapter 4 explores Turkle's concern about the impact of technology on the psychological development of the human. She demonstrates at length that we nurture an affective and mimetic relationship with machines. Both Stiegler and Turkle tackle the issue of narcissism and show that our relationship with machines fully participates in the formation of identity because it fixates a sense of self in relation to the alterity of the machine/computer/tool. Individuation is therefore always techno-psychological. Both Turkle and Stiegler suggest that our dependence on technologies liquidates this primary narcissism, essential to the formation of the individual. By narcissism, Stiegler

[48] see Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society: The Future of Work*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016)

[49] The battle for intelligence refers to the techniques deployed for the capture and the formation of attention.
Cf: Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.17

does not simply mean self-love as it is the case with Turkle, but "auto-affection" and more largely "self-consciousness"[50]. Hence, when Stiegler claims that we are losing/have lost the feeling of existing, he is not, strictly speaking, putting the blame on new technologies but on our current aesthetic experience of technology. What we have a lost, in other words, is a certain attitude towards technology; this attitude is that of the artisan-amateur. The amateur, unlike the consumer, is able to relate positively with the object: "He is one who loves an object and sublimates and thus believes in that object[51]". The amateur, Stiegler says, is capable of care; she is capable to fully invest the object and establish a symbolic relation. To explicitate the importance of care in the narcissistic evolution of the individual, Stiegler draws on Winnicott and his insight on maternal care as the first pharmakon, that is, the first possession or supplement that instils the feeling that life is worth living and that is embodied in an object such as a "teddy bear" or a favorite blanket[52]". The amateur, like the child, will place his faith or love in prostheses. This is the act of sublimation. Having stressed the necessary connection between the capacity to develop a symbolic relationship with the object and the state of auto-affection, Stiegler affirms that our addiction to brands and merchandise engenders a negative form of sublimation, which is that of carelessness and disgust. As a result, the individual "sinks into anaesthesia, indifference, and apathy[53]" for the standardized consumption of identical objects does not allow the development of a singular sensibility. One is therefore drawn into a pathological state of disaffection. Turkle shows in contrast that our dependence upon technologies impoverishes significantly the quality and the authenticity of social relations, so that we are expecting more from computers and less from each other[54]. However, she believes that the malaise we are going through is not due to a loss of narcissism but an excess of it. She argues as a result that it is necessary to reconsider the place of technologies, the same way we need to ultimately reconsider our place as human beings. Despite a few divergences on the psychoanalytical account of technology, it

[50] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.113
[51] As quoted by Oliver Davis, 'Desublimation for Education in Democracy', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.169
[52] Tania Espinoza, 'The Technical Object of Psychoanalysis', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.155
[53] Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery; The Katastrophè of the Sensible*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Cambridge; Polity Press, 2015) p.23
[54] See Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other*, (New York; Basic Books, 2011)

will be stressed that Turkle, like Stiegler, calls for a politicization of the question of the relationship between new media and the mental activity of the human[55].

Though Turkle's and Stiegler's anxiety regarding the future of the human is justifiable, the section on Galloway intends to challenge their conception of technology, which I believe overemphasizes technology as meaning-producing. For Stiegler, indeed, the question of technics is closely related with that of meaning insofar as technics either constitutes, retains or transmit memory. The tool sediments meaning through the accumulation of past experiences and allows further inscriptive processes:

> A sharpened flint is a form in an inorganic matter that is nevertheless organised by sharpening it: the technical gesture 'engrams' an organization that transmits via the inorganic, opening for the first time in the history of life the possibility to transmits knowledges that were individually acquired but by a way that is not biological[56].

As such, technics is what makes culture possible. Hence, Stiegler articulates a programmatology in which technics is the arche-writing that allows the emergence of a human world[57]. The fact that he puts the emphasis on the transmissive function of the tool gives rise to two major issues: firstly, it makes of technics a communicative instrument, secondly, it implies a logocentric account of technics, which is therefore always techno-logical. Galloway explains on this issue that the conception of new media as communicative tool, though in some sense accurate, is insufficient to fully apprehend their complexity. Media technologies also flirt with the non-discursive and the extra-discursive which Galloway coins as excommunication[58].

Galloway's point is not to discard technology as meaning-bearer but to show that new technologies are more than mere meaning-determining apparatus capable of producing or destroying, curing or poisoning the socio-political state of affairs. The

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[55] *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Gerald Moore and Christina Howells (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.2
[56] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.51
[57] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, ed. and trans. Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.51
[58] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London; The University of Chicago Press, 2014)

ambiguous figure of Hermes, the god-messenger that gave its name to hermeneutics, illustrates perfectly the duality of media, for Galloway. Though conducive of meaning, the Greek deity is also known in mythology for being deceptive: Hermes cheats our expectations, lies on multiple occasions, and distorts the content of the message. This leads Galloway to analyze two models of networks which, according to him, have been in play since the Antiquity; the chain of triumph and the web of ruin. In this respect, the process of mediation can be structurally ordered as much as it can be an enactment of a certain chaos, which is characteristic of "furious media[59]". Overall, Galloway suggests contra Stiegler that technology as a network, possess entropic tendencies that are aesthetically as valuable as their negentropic counterparts. To put it briefly, entropy refers to the "breakdown of order" while negative entropy or negentropy is "the resistance to collapse[60]". As a reader of Simondon, Stiegler does acknowledge that technology is traversed by entropy and negentropy, but he argues that technological evolution, and the organization of life in general, must feed on negative entropy in order to compensate with the loss of energy and/or natural decay. Hence, technological evolution is mostly conceived by Stiegler as a transmissible and cumulative process which is that of the epiphylogenesis. Regarding our current aesthetic relationship with technology, if we have any, Stiegler suggests that it has become increasingly entropic due to our consumerist habits that are encouraging an economy of waste, rather than of creativity. Though Galloway does not directly address the issue pointed out by Stiegler, his work allows us to apprehend in more positive terms the aesthetic values of ruin and destruction, an idea which I intend to reinforce with the work of Walter Benjamin on cinema. I will then move on Galloway's understanding of protocol. Protocol, as he puts it, is a set of rules and instructions that grounds the internet[61]. Put more broadly, the protocol refers to a decentralized and invisible system of management; its main function is to command. As such, the protocol articulates a network in which there is no will, only a number of operations; a quanta of power, as Galloway says[62]. However, this abstraction of power as mere effect of protocol is only

[59] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London; The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.62
[60] Gerald Moore, 'Adapt Smile or Die! Stiegler Among the Darwinist', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.26
[61] Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England; The MIT Press, 2004) p.74
[62] Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks,* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.7

one side of the story. I will thus conclude this chapter in pointing out that due to his reading of Foucault, Galloway still assumes the effectivity of control and surveillance at the heart of the programming activity.

Galloway's intervention regarding the protocologization of social/cyber spaces seems to give credit to Stiegler's theory of psychopower. Indeed, Galloway's analogy of the highway in which it is suggested overall that freedom is the product of a protocological system that formalizes the conditions of its aesthetic experience, gives us a lot to think about. He thus writes:

> Freedom of expression is no longer relevant; freedom of use has taken its place. Consider two categories: the computer user and the computer programmer. One designates the mass of computer society, the other a clan of technical specialists. Or not? The user and the programmer are also two rubrics for understanding one's relationship to art. ("There are two musics," wrote Roland Barthes, "the music one listens to, [and] the music one plays.") "User" is a modern synonym for "consumer." It designates all those who participate in the algorithmic unfoldings of code. On the other hand, "programmer" is a modern synonym for "producer." It designates all those who participate *both* in the authoring of code and in its process of unfolding. Users are executed. But programmers execute themselves. Thus "user" is a term for any passive or "directed" experience with technology, while "programmer" means any active or "undirected" experience with technology. Taken in this sense, anyone can be a programmer if he or she so chooses. If a person installs a game console modchip, he is programming his console. If she grows her own food, she is programming her biological intake[63].

Can we experience freedom other than as an effect of programming industries? More broadly, is freedom condemned to the object of strategic relations? The fact that Galloway refers at length to Foucault's body of work leads him to identify a necessary concomitance between power-relations and the practices of freedom in which freedom can only be exercised within a frame of procedures and conventions, that is, through mechanisms of control. Yet, I will argue in the final chapter that it is not that simple. First of all, the presence of mechanisms of control does not imply de facto their effectivity or their efficiency. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun notes for her part that the reception of the works of mid-'60s intellectual figures such as Foucault and Deleuze gave rise to a paranoia of control among scholars. She argues that the latter have turned freedom into an object of power, leading to the presumption that one is never free but

[63] Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks,* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.143

always caught in a network. She thus suggests that the mystification of new technologies as apparatuses of control stems from the power of our own belief in the powerfulness of control: "paranoia does not respond to an overwhelming, all-seeing power but rather to a power found to be lacking[64]". The fact that internet had largely contributed to the emergence of visual culture perpetuates this impression of being seen, but computers do not see; they make the invisible visible in translating and generating codes and texts[65]. However, this does not mean that Chun refutes the political reality of the twinning of control and freedom in the current programming structures. She rather suggests that it is not an inevitability. The intrusiveness of internet coupled with the uncertainty of being seen, has certainly raised anxiety among consumers. Yet, it is this uncertainty that constitutes the real power of the digital age, not *actual* control. As such, Chun argues that control is not a fact, but a possibility. One needs in this respect to reconsider one's relationship with technologies, and more largely with one's conception of power. While Galloway argues that enjoyment is the alibi of control, Chun seems to suggest that control is the alibi of our own resistance to freedom, which we struggle to fully seize.

In my mind, Stiegler's recent work on automaticity exemplifies well the concerns of Chun regarding our paranoid response to power. Throughout the *Automatic Society: The Future of Work*, Stiegler affirms, for example, that the algorithmatization of existence has led to a society of hyper-control, which is comparable to an electronic Leviathan[66]. Though it is unclear if Stiegler is referring to the Biblical monster or Hobbes' famous text (though it is probably both), such an analogy remains very significant regarding his own conception of control, which is centralized, sprawling and totalizing. As a result, Stiegler's tone grows more and more alarmist as he worries about the instalment of systems of trackability on electronic devices. In his defence, Stiegler is not the only one to give a terrifying portrait of our

[64]Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.301
[65] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, 'On Software, or the Persistence of Visual Knowledge', Grey Room no.18, winter 2005, p.26-51
[66] Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society: The Future of Work*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) p.127

contemporary techno-culture and would probably find a powerful ally in the person of Yuval Noah Harari.

In this respect, I find myself on the side of Chun when she argues that despite its tracking ability, internet is rarely actively and effectively surveilling us. Chun refuses to posit the individual as a powerless agent entrapped in a system of control, but she does not wish either to present internet as the space of infinite freedom. However, she believes that the bridging of control and freedom, that is, the belief that freedom is the product of control, has led to a pessimistic and paranoiac account of the digital era. As such, Chun argues that it is freedom that needs to be treated as a fact and control as a possibility, not the reverse. On a broader level, I suggest by the means of her work that a certain distance should be taken from the Foucauldian account of power-control in which the internet remains too often reduced to a panoptic tool.

In conclusion, while this thesis argues for the necessity to deploy techniques of care in order to cultivate the feeling of existing, the paranoid mind-set that leads thinkers like Stiegler to assume the political reality of unfreedom runs the risk of turning care into a disciplinary measure, hence being equally existentially harmful for the human.

Taking Care of Youth and The Generations: French Philosophy and New Media

This work should be read as a contribution to Stiegler's scholarship and to French Philosophy in general, more than an attempt to significantly nurture, or expand, the field of new media theory. The thesis departs from the series of conclusions drawn by Stiegler in *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, often considered as controversial among its readers[67]. The reason for this discomfort lies in Stiegler's nostalgic defence of traditions, that is, the defence of the family unit, the values of

[67] Christina Howells, ''Le défaut d'origine: The Prosthetic Constitution of Love and Desire', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.150

work and that of an old-fashioned patriotism. However, this nostalgic defence does not constitute my concern here.

Stiegler's politics of care is the true object of my inquiry. With this in mind, I intend to investigate the whys and wherefores of his position. While my reading offers a particular focus on *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, it nonetheless aims to cover Stiegler's work as a whole from *Technics and Time* to *The Automatic Society*. I have chosen to focus on *Taking Care* because I consider that this text marks a shift in Stiegler's philosophical journey and that it deserves closer attention. Stiegler already expressed some reservations about our current technological environment in the third volume of *Technics and Time*, *Acting out*, or in the two tomes of *The Symbolic Misery*[68], but it is in *Taking of Youth and The Generations*, in my point of view, that the positivity of his discourse becomes openly tainted with suspicion, pessimism, and paranoia. But how does this paranoia articulate itself and is it justified?

To me, the answer shall be found in Stiegler's concept of psychopower, which, as I have said in the sections above, describes the massive exploitation of consciousnesses by cultural industries and motivates Stiegler to reactivate practices of care in the context of new media.

Chapter 1 begins with Sartre and explores his philosophy of freedom. Though it would be tempting to rely on the works of Heidegger on this issue, I show that Stiegler's discourse bears strong similarities with Sartre and that such a connection helps us to decipher the phenomenological and existentialist undertone of his approach. I do not intend to modernize Sartre's philosophy through Stiegler. My reading of Sartre remains in fact quite traditional. But it is Sartre, I argue, that holds the key to Stiegler's half-phenomenological, half-existentialist, insights on freedom and psychopower.

Chapter 2 focuses on Foucault. While it is customary to oppose Sartre and Foucault, I intend to do something different. This section wishes to offer points of contrast between Sartre and Foucault, but does so only to maintain a continuity which

[68] Unlike the english editions, the two volumes of *The Symbolic Misery* were originally published before *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*.

is crystallized around the thematic of the cultivation of self. Throughout the chapter, I investigate Foucault's model of power which I believe to be essential if one wants to fully grasp the political resonance of Stiegler's concept of psychopower.

Chapter 3 discusses Stiegler's philosophy of technics and its importance for the biological, historical, psychological, and cultural development of the human. The chapter examines the reality of psychopower as described by Stiegler and the political necessity of care. After this, I then suggest, by the means of a short introduction to the part dedicated on new media, that it is Stiegler's Foucauldian reading of power-relations that plants the seeds of his paranoid model of psychopower.

It becomes clear in this respect that my aim is to challenge Stiegler's narrative on psychopower, that is, its reality and its efficacy. I propose to do so by opening a conversation with thinkers whose research explicitly targets the cultural impact of new media whether it is on our notion of intimacy (Turkle), our experience of freedom (Galloway), or own relation with power (Chun). The key aim in invoking these three thinkers in particular is to identify potential weaknesses in Stiegler's discourse which I believe to be the implicit result of a certain French Tradition, namely the Sartrean and Foucauldian one[69]. It is to shed light on this particular legacy, which I argue is in effect in Stiegler's thought, that I am turning to Turkle, Galloway and Chun. Their works, as we shall see, express an evident interest in French Philosophy. My discussion with these thinkers will be voluntarily selective in this respect, and might even be viewed as somewhat instrumental. It will leave aside key figures such as Huhtamo, Flusser, Kittler, Vissman, Manovich or Parikka. This is because it is not the purpose of this thesis to give a summary of the field of new media, and nor is it my ambition to reflect on media (and technics in general) as an empirical object, given Stiegler's own approach of the theme[70]. Using the works of Turkle, Galloway and Chun, I identify three points of contention in Stiegler's argument:

[69] My thesis does not put the blame on Sartre and Foucault. Instead, it wishes to uncover the internal dynamic of Stiegler's argument on psychopower; it hints at the said and the unsaid of his philosophical position regarding the culture of new media.

[70] Stiegler's understanding of technics/technology is voluntary broad and obscure. As I will explain in chapter 3, his definition designates equally skills, instruments, craftsmanship, ancient techniques, modern technologies, machines, computers and digital media in general. In fact, Stiegler's position may be quite paradoxical for he refuses to simply reduce technics to the realm of empirical objects, despite its undeniable materiality. This is why his approach remains mostly theoretical and conceptual. Though

1) He assumes a direct correlation between the technical field and the psychological development of the human.
2) He makes of technics a rational process.
3) He tends to take the efficacy of systems of psychopower for granted.

In chapter 4, I explore the correlation between the technical field and the psychological development of the human at play in Stiegler's argument. Such an equivalence, I claim, runs the risk of reducing technics to a mere reflective tool. Drawing on the phenomenological tradition, Stiegler gives too much importance to the first-person point of view and often does so at the expense of the mode of existence of the technical object itself[71]. His argument, I contend, resonates with Turkle's account of media and enables me to link Stiegler's theoretical approach with more concrete examples. I compare the two with the key aim of uncovering in Stiegler's philosophy a propensity to see in technics the mirror of the human and to show the limits of this approach.

Chapter 5 offers a discussion of Galloway. For Stiegler, technics enables humans to achieve consciousness, build memories and transmit past knowledge to future generations. In short, technics articulates meaning and constitutes the architecture of human history. But to argue this, I claim, is to endow technics with effective rationality and to present its historical development as teleological. This is on this point that Galloway's work comes as particularly useful. If both express concerns regarding the culture industries — which they respectively name ludic capitalism and psychopower— Galloway's insight on media diverges, insofar as he chooses to apprehend them on the basis of their opacity and their unworkability. In other words, technics (media for Galloway) is not tributary to the light of reason. It is

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my incursion in the field of new media enables me to be more explicit than Stiegler, I tend to follow the spirit of his approach.

[71] The implicit reference to Simondon's *Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* here is intentional. As mentions Michael Lewis, Stiegler aims to show by the means of the latter that technics "has a dynamics of its own which can be ascertained only *empirically*" and that the very autonomy of the external memory support *defines* man. I am not refuting this argument, but it is nonetheless technics-as-process (or dynamics if we follow Lewis), rather than technics-as-object, that mostly interests Stiegler.
See Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in *Technics and Time',* in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.61

this posture that is precisely missing in Stiegler's account and which, I claim, deserves more attention if one is to elaborate a politics of care in the digital age.

Chapter 6 tackles the paranoia of control throughout Chun's contributions. If the two points raised above largely contribute to accentuate the climate of suspicion regarding the future technics is possibly designing for us, it is the faith in the actuality of control that seals Stiegler's argument. It occurs to me that, due to his reading of Foucault, Stiegler tends to treat the possibility of psychopower as a fact while hardly questioning its fallibility or its limits. It is on this precise issue that Chun's contributions appear useful to me. Not only is she spelling out my concerns about the climate of suspicion surrounding new media, she also invites us to reflect on the Foucauldian legacy, which, as I intend to demonstrate in chapter 3, nurtures Stiegler's argument on care in the face of psychopower.

Overall, I hope to give by the means of this thesis a thorough account of Stiegler's politics of care while, at the same time, expressing my clear reserves about his model of psychopower.

THE AESTHETICS OF THE SELF

I- SARTRE: FROM THE *TRANSCENDANCE OF THE EGO* TO 'EXISTENTIAL' PSYCHOANALYSIS

It may look a bit hackneyed to go back to Sartre, especially when the second part of the thesis is addressing the digital. However, Sartre's work shares several points in common with Stiegler's. This will be rendered more evident through Foucault, which will enable me to bridge them together through the key theme of the aesthetics of existence. Yet, few things can already be said about Stiegler's and Sartre's philosophical compatibilities. First of all, the two have been influenced by the phenomenology of Husserl. As a result, they both make the intentionality of consciousness the core feature of the process of individuation. On the precise issue of individuation, it must be brought to attention that Stiegler's work puts the stress on the lack of essence as ontologically constitutive. This argument finds a clear resonance with Sartre's philosophy, which can indeed be described as a non-self philosophy, and does address the theme of psycho-social individuation[72] through the process of exteriorization. In addition, they both situate freedom within consciousness. For Sartre, this form of freedom is inalienable and absolute, for Stiegler, it isn't, insofar as consciousness remains vulnerable to strategies of power. They also share a same interest for psychoanalysis. Indeed, they both engage with Freud and Lacan[73]. This psychoanalytic background will allow both of them to turn to self-therapeutics. For Sartre, this is an existential issue, for Stiegler, a political necessity. Moreover, Sartre's

[72] It may be odd to bring "selfhood" and "individuation" together. If it is odd, it is because it conveys opposed ideas about the individual. Indeed, it is tempting to put selfhood on the side of substantialism (the pre-existing cogito of Descartes for example). On the contrary, individuation rather suggests hylomorphism (produced and processed through form and matter). Selfhood suggest unity, stability and un-changeability; individuation hints at the reverse. Sartre's philosophy goes through this odd combination and proposes a conception of selfhood based on individuation; it asserts self *as* individuation.

[73] And as we will see in chapter 4, Stiegler also draws on Winnicott when developing on the psychological value of the transitional object.

work on the theme of self-cultivation bears something crucial: the notion of responsibility, which is the very condition of possibility for the individual to grasp the meaningfulness of her own existence and to achieve freedom. It is on this point that the two figures meet again, as Stiegler argues for his part, that responsibility has been destroyed in the last decades due to "the addictive and cynical triviality"[74] of our cultural environment. For Stiegler, reconstructing selfhood entails the reconstructing of responsibility, which is in turn constitutive of a free and meaningful existence.

For all these reasons, I believe that operating a return to Sartre[75] is useful to better apprehend Stiegler's diagnosis about the loss of the feeling of existing, before focusing on the modalities of its cure with the help of Foucault.

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[74]Christina Howells, ''Le défaut d'origine: The Prosthetic Constitution of Love and Desire', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.147

[75] There is nothing particularly new regarding this approach as one can attest to in the work of Žižek, something evident in *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. But the opposition between consciousness and social history is often taken for granted. In the *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno already raises this issue: "The antinomy between the determination of the individual and the social responsibility that contradicts this determination is not due to a misuse of concepts. It is a reality, the moral indication that the universal and particular are unreconciled" (p.264-265) While Adorno wishes to reassert the free subject as he believes that the "use the strength of the subject" (p. xx) will enable us "to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity", he argues that this does not have to be done at the cost of socio-historical considerations. Indeed, the responsibility of the subject stems from and depends from the possibilities offered by the historical context. In other words, the subject and the social form and deform each other, while the issue of responsibility, instead of strictly depending on one *or* another, circulate between these two poles; as such, responsibility is at the same time an individual *and* a collective matter, conditioned and rendered possible by both. Adorno's essay on *Commitment*, which proposes a focus on Sartre's *What Is Literature?* argues that these themes are already present in his philosophy of situational freedom, though partly underestimated by Sartre himself: "For Sartre, its task is to awaken the free choice of the agent, that makes authentic existence possible at all, as opposed to the neutrality of the spectator. But what gives commitment its esthetic advantage over tendentiousness also renders the content to which the artist commits himself inherently ambiguous. In Sartre, the notion of choice—originally a Kierkegaardian category—is heir to the Christian doctrine 'He who is not with me is against me', but now voided of any concrete theological content. What remains is merely the abstract authority of a choice enjoined, with no regard for the fact that the very possibility of choosing depends on what can be chosen. The archetypal situation always cited by Sartre to demonstrate the irreducibility of freedom merely underlines this. Within a predetermined reality, freedom becomes a vacant claim: Herbert Marcuse has exposed the absurdity of the philosophical theorem that it is always possible inwardly either to accept or to reject martyrdom. Yet this is precisely what Sartre's dramatic situations are designed to demonstrate. But his plays are nevertheless bad models of his own existentialism, because they display in their respect for truth the whole administered universe which his philosophy ignores; the lesson we learn from them is one of unfreedom".

See: Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1992) and 'Commitment', in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, eds. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1993)

However, Sartre's philosophy of self is rich. This is why I propose for this first chapter to reformulate his main ideas in order to stress the necessity of self-cultivation as the exercise of freedom. In that sense, this section is intentionally exegetic.

Here is what the chapter aims to cover:

I will depart from the *Transcendance of the Ego*, in which Sartre problematizes the issue of individuation and claims self as the transcendent object of consciousness. Criticized for the solipsistic nature of his early philosophy, Sartre intends to refine his model of selfhood in his major piece of work *Being and Nothingness*, where he claims "I exist my body"[76]. By the means of this statement, Sartre aims to reinforce self as being-in-the-world, insofar as consciousness is necessarily embodied and situated. Yet, Sartre is not able to fully account for the existence of the other and struggles to develop a convincing ethics. In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre focuses on the notion of engagement, hereby implying that it is because I am condemned to be free, that I am responsible for myself and the way others treat me. If I need the other to maximize my freedom, the overall concept of freedom is understood by Sartre as the possibility to engage in a fundamental project of existence[77], which itself aims at the reunification of the being-for-itself and the being-in-itself. However, Sartre suggests that such fundamental project must be revealed through the undertaking of a therapy. Borrowing both from Freud and Lacan, Sartre thus elaborates an existential psychoanalysis that renders evident the need to find instruments for the cultivation of selfhood.

[76] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.351
[77]Paul Crittenden, 'The Fundamental Project', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) pp. 152-162

1.1 CONSCIOUSNESS, SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE 'I' IN SARTRE'S *TRANSCENDENCE OF THE EGO*

Philosophy has long been attached to the idea of an inner self, whether captured under the notion of a soul or a transcendental subjectivity. Among these theories, one could mention the sophistic paradox of inquiry that led Plato to ground the possibility of knowledge in the process of the soul's recollection (*anamnesis*). In this respect, the soul was believed to be a cognitive entity that originally belonged to a pure reality (the world of Forms); it stood as an inner truth that transcends the body and *knows already*. Later, rationalist philosophers such as Kant agreed to some extent on the preeminence of pure ideas and *a priori* judgments as the main architectures of knowledge. Descartes, for his part, grounds the possibility of knowledge (through the methodical doubt) in a pre-conditional interiority. Hence, the Cartesian theory advocates for a model of selfhood constituted inwardly; a model of self that calls for introspection. Finally, Freud's work on the unconscious contributed to the prosperity of an individual interior influencing our actions and doings.[78] In this respect, Sartre's phenomenological investigations attempt to move away from these presumptions to observe instead a self as a psycho-social construct.

'Self' is not a typical Sartrean term. In the early stage of his career, Sartre prefers the term of "ego" to elaborate on his model of selfhood. In *The Transcendence of the Ego,* Sartre adopts an Husserlian approach in agreeing with the main principle of phenomenology which asserts that consciousness is consciousness of something[79]. But Sartre distances himself from Husserl, unsatisfied with his later works. As Beata Stawarska explains:

> Sartre's relation to Husserl may seem curious, if not downright paradoxical. An outspoken

[78] Kenneth J Gergen, 'Technology and the self: From the Essential to the Sublime', in *Constructing the Self in a mediated Age* (London: Sage, 1996) pp. 127-140.
[79] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) Introduction: Section V, p. lx.

> enthusiast of phenomenology, which would liberate philosophy of its idealist heritage and bring it back into the world, Sartre simultaneously, and just as passionately, an uncompromising critic of the methodological and categorical apparatus the Husserl of *Ideen I* (…) put into the service of mapping out transcendental consciousness. One could dissolve this paradox by deeming Sartre faithful to the perceived spirit of Husserl's phenomenology, but not to its word. Yet such a settlement glosses over the fact that this paradox is not simply a result of a scholarly disagreement. Sartre holds philosophy accountable in the face of the world where suffering, hunger and the war are both a possibility and a daily reality — the philosophical task cannot therefore ever be confined to a narrowly epistemological problem, but must also be existential, ethical and political[80].

As an existential phenomenologist, Sartre rejects the Husserlian idea of a transcendental ego, the same way he rejects the Kantian subject of apperception, that is, the transcendental I as synthesizer of experience. Opposed to Husserl's subjective idealism, Sartre refutes the idea of a quasi-substantial I that would be the necessary condition through which the world emerges: "It is, on the contrary, consciousness that renders the unity and personality of my I possible". In this respect, "the transcendental I thus has no *raison d'être*.[81] " In more simple terms, this means that the ego does not inhabit consciousness, nor does it precede it. Instead, Sartre posits the ego as the *product* of consciousness. This means that the ego is not the synthesizer of experience, but an object synthetized like any other object of experience. As Hazel E. Barnes mentions, consciousness "is not a being" for Sartre, but an "activity[82]".

Sartre then argues in the *Transcendance of the Ego* that the first mode of consciousness is a pre-reflective non-positional consciousness. It is consciousness *as* the implicit consciousness *of* its conscious state. Leo Fretz indicates that (non)-positional pre-personal consciousness is reflexive for it is able to "curve back[83]" on itself. But it is not yet reflective, precisely because it cannot bracket itself as an object, nor can it synthetize itself under an I. Personal consciousness comes therefore as a second mode of consciousness which acts as the redoubling of the first mode of consciousness. It is through reflective consciousness that I can posit myself as subject. Sartre's model of consciousness is very Husserlian in the fact that it is directed towards

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[80] Beta Stawarska, 'Sartre and Husserl's *Ideen*: Phenomenology and Imagination"', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) p.12

[81] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendance of the Ego: A Sketch for Phenomenological Description,* trans. Andrew Brown (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 4

[82] Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.37

[83] Leo Fretz, 'Individuality in Sartre's Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.74

objects and only exists in its positional (or intentional) capacity. It is through the capacity of consciousness to seize itself as object, that the *I* emerges, and that individuation occurs. The key point to remember at this stage is that individuation is understood by Sartre as a singular synthetization of experience. However, individuation is not triggered by the intentionality of consciousness alone, even less by the ego, but conditioned by the necessity of transcendence, that is, the object. As such, individuation is a process of interiorization of the exterior insofar as consciousness can only constitutes itself through the object. The ego, which derives from the activity of consciousness, consolidates such experience through synthetization.

As the result of the synthetizing activity of consciousness, the ego must be thought as an *ideal* fusion of my psychic states. This means that it is not a *real existent*, as Sartre will confirm later in his major work *Being and Nothingness*; it is a perspective, an observation, a narrative. Because it is a narrative, the ego has no essence, nor does it possess an inner truth that awaits to be disclosed. I cannot know myself in the same way I develop a knowledge on real objects, for there is no such thing as an objective or fixed self. On that matter, Sartre declares: "the intuition of the ego is a perpetually deceptive mirage, since, at one and the same time, it yields everything and it yields nothing"[84]. On the other hand, Sartre acknowledges that we tend to *feel* self as a profoundly innate, for we like to portray ourselves as unchangeable characters. It is thus comforting to think there must lie within oneself a plateau that stand as the foundation of one's character, personality traits, actions and emotions. Yet, the I remains an imaginary object. This lack of identity shall not be considered as a flaw. Instead, it is for Sartre what enables the individual to exert her freedom and to act out in the world insofar as the individual can change and reinvent herself.

This does not mean either that the I is empty or futile. In fact, Sartre's model of the cogito is both *reflective* and *reflected*. Indeed, I can reflect on objects of experience as well as I can reflect on the *I* who is reflecting on objects. This is why, Sartre tells us, I can remember a certain landscape I saw few days ago, as well as I can

[84] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendance of the Ego: A Sketch for Phenomenological Description,* trans. Andrew Brown (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p.22

remember *me seeing* that landscape[85]. In other words, the *I* enables me to grasp consciousness as *mine* and think of myself as *me*, that is, as subject. Hence, consciousness of self occurs in a process of objectification and is essential to grasp one's own individuality, for to grasp oneself as an individual one must feel inhabited.

> Now, it is undeniable that the Cogito is personal. In the 'I think', there is an I which thinks. We here reach the I in its purity and it is indeed from the Cogito that an 'Egology' must begin. And so, the fact that can be taken as the starting point is this: each time that we grasp our thought, either by an immediate intuition, or by an intuition based on memory, we grasp an I which is the I of the thought that is being grasped and which, furthermore, gives itself as transcending this thought and all other possible thoughts[86].

Here lies the whole ambiguity of selfhood: though experienced as immanent, it is in fact transcendent, and though thought as stable, it is elusive. For these reasons, Sartre describes the ego as a 'deceptive mirage[87]'. However, this deceptive mirage is crucial for the constitution of the individual, because it is in the endless quest for self-coincidence that one can once again cultivate her freedom. This point will be developed further down.

Overall, while the ego is transcendent, consciousness is certainly for Sartre transcendental. And it is in the transcendentality of consciousness, or its impersonal spontaneity[88], that freedom shall be primarily found insofar as it constitutes human consciousness' fundamental property. Hence, when Sartre claims that freedom is absolute at the beginning of his career, he refers to the spontaneity of consciousness that enables us to choose, but also to imagine and project meaning onto the world. He is not suggesting that one has unlimited powers over a situation or that one is capable to fully detach herself from social constraints. The claim is simply psychological at this stage, insofar as Sartre locates freedom within the structures of consciousness. Consciousness is free because it is "uncaused, neither acting *on* phenomena, nor yet

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[85] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendance of the Ego: A Sketch for Phenomenological Description,* trans. Andrew Brown (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p.6
[86] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendance of the Ego: A Sketch for Phenomenological Description,* trans. Andrew Brown (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p.6
[87] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendance of the Ego: A Sketch for Phenomenological Description,* trans. Andrew Brown (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p.22
[88] The term of spontaneity will be preferred from now on when referring to the transcendentality of consciousness, insofar as Sartre will progressively cease to use the term 'transcendental' in his writings. Christina Howells suggests that this may be due to "its Kantian overtones".
Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.2

acted on *by* phenomena"[89]. This does not mean either that consciousness is isolated from the world or separated from reality. Instead, Sartre phenomenological approach conceives consciousness as always being "in and of the world"[90]. In sum, individuation takes place primarily within the unifying activity of consciousness. And it is by the means of individuation that one can experience freedom as the spontaneous and irreducible element of human existence.

1.2 *BEING AND NOTHINGNESS*: "I EXIST MY BODY"

Sartre writes in the *Transcendence of the Ego* that "the body thus acts as a visible and tangible symbol for the I"[91]. Yet, he does not develop much on that issue, for his main concern is to assert the ego as "an *ideal* unity of all states and actions[92]". However, the Sartrean model of consciousness sketched throughout the *Transcendance of the Ego* takes a new turn in *Being and Nothingness.* First, Sartre is determined to move off from the egological experience he adopted in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, to assert instead the decisive role of the other in the individual's apprehension of self. But he also argues that consciousness is embodied; a stance that may remind us that of Merleau-Ponty[93]. While Sartre tends to overlook the role of the body at the beginning of his career, he corrects this mistake in his later texts. However, he nourishes some anger and bitterness towards it, for he makes the

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[89] Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.14

[90] Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.15

[91] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendance of the Ego: A Sketch for Phenomenological Description,* trans. Andrew Brown (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p.23

[92] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendance of the Ego: A Sketch for Phenomenological Description,* trans. Andrew Brown (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) p.22

[93] Merleau-Ponty writes: "The 'here' of my body does not refer to a determinate position in relation to other positions or to external coordinates, but the laying down of the first coordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, the situation of the body in the face of its tasks", Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962) p.100

body — and selfhood in general — subjected to the gaze of the other. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre states that consciousness incarnates itself within a body; flesh is the necessary envelop of consciousness. However, it must be outlined that consciousness *is not* a body per se. Sartre's assertion "I exist my body"[94] must be clarified:

> It is not true that the body is the product of an arbitrary decision on the part of a demiurge nor that the union of soul and body is the contingent bringing together of two substances radically distinct. On the contrary, the very nature of the for-itself demands that it be body; that is, that its nihilating escape from being should be made in the form of an engagement in the world. Yet in another sense the body manifests my contingency; we can even say that it is *only* this contingency. The Cartesian rationalists were right in being struck with this characteristic; in fact it represents the individualization of my engagement in the world. And Plato was not wrong either in taking the body as *that which individualizes the soul*. Yet it would be in vain to suppose that the soul is the body inasmuch as the for-itself is its own individualization[95].

Consciousness always stands as *someone's* consciousness. This means that I experience myself as flesh and not just as a non-substantial thinking entity. And though my identity cannot be reduced to my body, it cannot be thought without. Indeed, if the *I* is characterized as the synthesis of one's conscious relations, those conscious relations must at some point be filtered by the body. It is for all these reasons, Sartre says, that I must understand myself as *existing my body*.

Despite his acknowledgement of the body, Sartre mostly thinks corporeality as repressive insofar as it forces the individual to be situated. Sartre distinguishes for example the body as for-itself and the body for-others. The body for-itself characterizes the body as lived from the first-person perspective, while the body for-others characterizes the body as object of observance. Overall, Sartre rejects the idea of the objective body, for one's body cannot be *known*; it is experienced. And this experience is always biased, for I do not constitute myself according to how people objectively look at me, but rather according to how I think people look at me. In this respect, one never ceases to be a psychic projection, born from the way one positions

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[94] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.351
[95] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.409

oneself among others and within the world. As states Hazel E. Barnes, "the body is a point of view on the world, but a point of view on which I cannot take a point of view[96]". There is between my body and I, an irreconcilable distance. Sartre thus writes in *Being and Nothingness*:

> I *see* my hand touching objects, but do not *know* it in its act of touching them. This is the fundamental reason why that famous "sensation of efforts" of Maine de Biran does not really exist. For my hand reveals to me the resistance of objects, their hardness or softness, but not *itself*. Thus, I see this hand only in the way that I see this inkwell. I unfold a distance between it and me, and this distance comes to integrate itself in the distances which I establish among all the objects of the world[97].

In Sartre's philosophy, the individual is condemned to solitude. This comes evident in his conception of the experience of touch, for example:

> Of course when I touch my leg with my finger, I realize that my leg is touched. But this phenomenon of double sensation is not essential: cold, a shot of morphine, can make it disappear. This shows that we are dealing with two essentially different orders or reality. To touch and to be touched, to feel that one is touching and to feel that one is touched — these are two species of phenomena which it is useless to try to reunite by the term "double sensation". In fact they are radically distinct, and they exist on two incommunicable levels[98].

Here Sartre rejects Merleau-Ponty's views on 'double sensation' as evidence of the continuous link that connects me with the other. Whereas Merleau-Ponty believes in the reciprocal and unifying experience of touch, for touching means being touched; Sartre asserts that the two cannot be ontologically brought together, for they constitute in fact separate phenomena. Sartre does not completely ignore the reversibility of flesh, but such reversibility is not simultaneous. While I can feel I am touching someone or something, I only realize afterwards that I am being touched. In this respect, being touched is less a *sensation* than a *realization*; an experience that comes with reflection. It means also that there are no such things as objective revelation on embodiment, objects, or sensation[99]. Overall, Sartre's conception of selfhood remains stuck in the trap of ipseity. Leo Fretz thus explains that Sartre fails to render

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[96] Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.21
[97] op. citere
[98] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.403
[99] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.420

ontologically evident the presence of the Other [100]. Indeed, the gaze and the experience of shame are not enough to prove the existence of the Other. In fact, the experience of shame might also be the product of my own paranoia, as Fretz indicates. This reconciliation with the other is what Sartre's philosophy struggles to overcome for the other is rather seen as an enemy than an ally.

On one hand, Sartre argues that I only exist in a situation. But on the other hand, the relationship I may have towards myself, others, and the world in general, is univocal. While Sartre's conception of psychic individuation through the experience of the body allows him to think in depth the theme of individuality, it struggles to admit the positivity of transindividuality[101]. For Sartre, there is no reciprocal collective bond; no solidarity. The only way for one to relate to the other would be in taking recourse to the Kantian model of reasoning by asking oneself if one's actions can be sustainable as a universal principle. However, the other always appears as the limit to one's own freedom, the same way one stands as the obstacle to the other's freedom. This lack of reciprocity in Sartre's philosophy[102] renders it hard to think the possibility of an ethics. In fact, his approach almost sounds as a validation for selfishness insofar as no one seems to owe anything to the other. Sartre's ethics focuses indeed on the individual choice, as we shall see in the next paragraphs.

1.3 CHOICE IN *EXISTENTIALISM IS A HUMANISM*

In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, freedom emerges as the explicit pivot of Sartre's model of selfhood; it is both a necessity and a horizon to achieve. This means that Sartre is not only describing freedom as key fundament of his ontology, he is also prescribing it.

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[100] see Leo Fretz, 'Individuality in Sartre's Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992)

[101] Unlike Simone De Beauvoir, for example, who articulates solidarity as the necessary bond between the I and the other.

[102] Sartre elaborates towards the end of his life an ethics of reciprocity through the concepts of fraternity and democracy. However, for the purpose of this work, I will leave aside Sartre's late ethics. For more details see: Marguerite La Caze, 'Hope and Affirmation: An Ethics of Reciprocity', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) p.206-212

Sartre claims during the lecture he originally gave in Paris at the Club Maintenant[103] that the individual is condemned to be free. I am condemned to be free in the sense that human consciousness *never ceases* to choose. To be *forced* to be free may sounds antinomic, but it is nonetheless how Sartre conceives freedom, that is, as a situation that leaves us no choice than that of ineluctably choosing. Yet, we are confronted with an endless succession of paradoxes in which freedom is coercive, consciousness both spontaneous and automatic, and choice involuntary. How do we resolve these paradoxes? For Sartre, this difficulty does not need to be faced, for it justifies responsibility. When he claims that "existence precedes essence[104]", he thus means:

> There is no human nature since there is no God to conceive it. Man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be, and since he conceives of himself only after he exists, just as he wills himself to be after being thrown into existence, man is nothing other than what he makes of himself[105].

It is not that I am able to change my manner of being (Sartre does not merely mean here that I can decide on my personality traits for example), but rather, that I am profoundly engaged in my existence, responsible for who I am and what I am doing. In this sense, we have to take for a fact that, for Sartre, that "man is, before all else, something that projects itself into a future, and is conscious of doing so".[106].

In this respect, my behavior sheds light on my project, indicates Sartre, just as my project is revealed, or articulated, throughout my actions. This is why human beings are nothing but what they do and are accountable for each of their enterprises. In that sense, it is right to call existentialism a morality of action and commitment, for my decisions espouse my project, and espouse a certain ethics. While I never cease to choose, and never cease to commit myself despite myself, I am still responsible for what I chose. Whatever path I decide to pursue reinforces the project I (knowingly or

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[103] Arlette Helkeïm-sartre, 'preface to the 1966 French Edition' in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, ed. by John Kulka, trans. Carole Macomber (London, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2007) p.vii

[104] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, ed. John Kulka, trans. Carole Macomber (London, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2007) p.20

[105] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, ed. John Kulka, trans. Carole Macomber (London, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2007) p.22

[106] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, ed. John Kulka, trans. Carole Macomber (London, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2007) p.23

unknowingly) assigned to myself. In that sense, denying the project or refusing to choose, remain forms of engagement. More broadly, Sartre makes of the radical choice the generator of moral principles. Because I am free and have no other possibility than being free, I am always choosing and expressing a commitment through my actions. The freedom of choice is the condition of meaning for Sartre, but also for ethics. Indeed, in choosing for him or herself, the individual chooses for all human beings[107] [108].

However, if it is impossible not to choose, can we still speak of choice? Isn't the impossibility of that situation negating the very nature of a choice as meaningful action? Besides, as Charles Taylor points out, if my choices represent the person I am — and vice versa — then who is the agent doing the choosing? In denying a form of a pre-agency that would be capable of evaluating the dilemma the individual is faced with, Sartre reduces the choice to a void and contingent expression. And if it is meaningless, we cannot talk about a choice at all. Taylor explains indeed that "in order for us to speak of choice, we cannot just find ourselves in one of the alternatives. We have in some sense to experience the pull of each and give our assent to one".[109]

Taylor believes that this form of engagement is incoherent, for in order to be faced with a dilemma, the individual must interpret the situation as such. If not, the

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[107] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, ed. John Kulka, trans. Carole Macomber (London, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2007) p.24

[108] Sartre's conception of ethics resonates with Kant's *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Indeed, Sartre writes in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (p.24) ;

> When we say that man chooses himself, not only do we mean that each of us must choose himself, but also that in choosing for himself, he is choosing for all men. In fact, in creating the man each of us wills ourselves to be, there is not a single one of our actions that does not at the same time creat an image of man as we think we ought to be. Choosing to be this is or that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for any of us unless it is good for all.

While Sartre uses a Kantian formulation, he actually does not subscribes to the Kantian ethics insofar as the latter acknowledge the pre-existence of moral principles to which the humans are meant to act in accordance. However, as Christina Howells explains, Sartre believes that "what makes an action moral is whether or not it is carried out in accordance with the categorical imperative of freedom". See Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.31

[109] Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1985) "What is human agency?" p.31

individual could easily dismiss one of the alternatives and, therefore, not have to choose. What Sartre forgot to take into account, according to Taylor, is that a choice is made with regard to something. In other words, we are choosing when we have no other choice. Decisions alone do not create or determine values. Rather, it is because the individual is confronted with two (or more) serious moral claims which he acknowledges as such, that he must choose. Taylor reminds us that for Sartre there is no moral source or universal law the individual can rely on, so that the individual must evaluate and weigh the situation before choosing A or B. Hence, in order to speak of a choice, such choice must presuppose an introspective exercise that inevitably brings us back to the model of identity, or agency as the source of the choosing. In short, the source of morality does not lie in my actions or decisions, but on the way I apprehend them. This leads also Taylor to affirm that it is not enough to think of self as born *ex nihilo*, precisely because identity is not made up through choices, but through series of evaluations, second-order desires, or preferences that make these choices possible.

> This is what is impossible in the theory of radical choice. The agent of radical choice would at the moment of choice have *ex hypothesis* no horizon of evaluation. He would be utterly without identity. He would be a kind of extensionless point, a pure leap into the void. But such a thing is an impossibility, or rather could only be the description of the most terrible mental alienation. The subject of radical choice is another avatar of that recurrent figure which our civilization aspires to realize, the disembodied ego, the subject who can objectify all being, including his own, and choose in radical freedom. But this promised total self-possession would in fact be the most total self-loss[110].

In this respect, it is not choice alone that defines myself, but the evaluation I ascribe to it. As such, Taylor reasserts the individual as self-interpretative subject. But Taylor's criticisms are mostly valid only for *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Sensing the limits of his own argument, Sartre will indeed progressively leave aside his philosophy of action, for a philosophy of reflection in which the 'project' of existence, as the aesthetic exercise of individual freedom, plays a key role.

[110] Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1985) "What is human agency?" p.35

1.4 THE HUMAN AS USELESS PASSION

For Sartre, the fundamental project of existence could be described as the attempt to reconcile the human's being-in-itself and being-for-itself, that is, her transcendence and facticity. In this respect, the fundamental project of existence is above all a project of unification[111].

Sartre argues that if the notion of inner self sounds so familiar and reassuring to us, it is because it corresponds to our profound desire to be totalized as in-itself and for-itself. However, that does not mean that facticity (in-itself) and transcendence (for-itself) are two separated realities of existence. Instead, they compose human existence. Thomas W. Busch explains then that it is "the lack of identity which provokes a desire for self-identity[112]". He is right. Sartre writes on this issue:

> Exiled from the identity of being, dispersed temporally and self-divided, being for-itself seeks to catch up with itself, to recover its dispersion and split identity in order to give itself meaning in the form of self-identity. Being factical, the for-itself is not its own foundation; it has no fundamental justification, no intrinsic meaningfulness. In its self-making, the for-itself creates and sustains a meaningful life, but cannot actually be that mode of life in self-identity, the mode of being in-itself. If being-for-itself could actually be, it would no longer exist as a for-itself, a self-maker. It would itself as a self because a self is a "break" in the identity of being[113].

The for-itself is a non-self and as such, is condemned to self-deceit. We *ex-ist*, which means that we live outside of our self. It is a privilege and a curse at the same time. It is a privilege because, unlike objects, we are endowed with the capacity to create ourselves. We are fundamentally free to choose who we are, to sculpt the person we aim to be. In that sense, to be human is a *poietic* experience, for we, individuals, never cease to create, to appropriate and sublimate ourselves. But it is also a curse because such *poietic* existence feeds on anguish, which is, for Sartre as well as it was for Heidegger, an inherent component of what it means to be human. Anguish is the

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[111] Paul Crittenden, 'The Fundamental Project', in *Jean Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) pp.152-162

[112] Thomas W. Busch, 'Self-making and Alienation: From Bad Faith to Revolution', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) p.169

[113] Thomas W. Busch, 'Self-making and Alienation: From Bad Faith to Revolution', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) p.169

fuel of human's existence. Anguish starts when self-identification fails. It is the revelation that *I* do not coincide with *myself*. The experience of such an existential void, that is, of *no-thing-ness*, forces me to pull myself together, to act out in the world and decide (to some extent) who I want to be. In other words, the project I assigned to myself compensates for the lack of essence and the lack of sense. The experience of the lack is what characterizes, transcends, the human condition. It can neither be ignored nor fulfilled. As such, human existence is always in the process of making; it is a continuous struggle, an ever-renewed deception.[114]

Hence, selfhood stands as the reconstitution of the essence we never had. For Sartre, the presumed self we are striving to recover, and/or the ideal self we are trying to reach through the project, is motivated by our trying to be God, that is, our trying to be self-contained and self-fulfilled. This synthesis of in-itself-for-itself is impossible to achieve and to believe otherwise would be an act of bad faith. Yet, it remains the ultimate object of desire.

The desire to know or (re)constitute oneself derives from one's natural desire to unify what is non-unifiable; the transcendent and the immanent. Pursuing such project equals for Sartre to the existential pursuit of authenticity. Though Sartre posits the fundamental project of existence as motivated by the desire to coincide with oneself, Sartre does not defend the perspective of being nothing other than oneself. As Jonathan Webber explains, if authenticity was to be explained as the coinciding with oneself, it could then justify the worst evils. According to him, "Sartre's attempt to cast authenticity as the supreme value need not face this problem[115]", for we shall not understand authenticity as the pretext for self-indulgence, but as a commitment to the person I ought to be. To pursue authenticity is not only to *accept* but to try to *own* freedom through the existential project: it only consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation" [116]. Brought up as the new goal of existence, authenticity is this horizon one should strive to attain, for in reaching authenticity,

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[114] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) pp. xxx–xxxi

[115] Jonathan Webber, 'Authenticity', in *Jean Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* edited by Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) p.141

[116] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Antisemite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*, new preface by Michael Walzer (1995), trans. George J. Becker (New York; Schocken Books, 1948) p.65

one's life would no longer be "frustrated in attempts to achieve the unachievable". Instead, "one would accept one's very break in being as the worthy life of freedom itself"[117].

To summarize, the human is a useless passion, because it is torn apart between its being-for-itself and its being-in-itself. Such ontological break constitutes the nature of existence. Despite her desire to be totalized, the individual is condemned to self-deceit, for such enterprise is unachievable. Bad faith, in this sense, also acts as a motor in the process of conversion towards authenticity. The next object of my concern is the following: why undertake a project of existence, which seems to only confronts us with failure?

1.5 THE PROJECT OF EXISTENCE

For Sartre, the project of existence shall not be viewed as the promotion of futile narcissism, for even if it is motivated by the very capricious desire to be reunited with oneself, it is above all turned towards the acceptance of one's existential condition and the full embracement of radical freedom. In this respect, the fundamental project is a free commitment to oneself as free being. The project of existence, which however values personal development, entails an ethical/moral dimension. As Phyllis Sutton Morris puts it in *Sartre's Concept of a Person*:

> Sartre thinks we are free to choose ourselves in the sense of choosing the self we want to be. But in other senses we are not in the least free to choose what we are. One must distinguish between those senses. In fairness to Sartre's critics, it should be added that he does not always make these distinctions explicit and that he sometimes misleadingly speaks as if freedom were 'total'.[118]

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[117] Thomas W. Busch, 'Self-making and Alienation: From Bad Faith to Revolution', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013), p.170

[118] Phyllis Sutton Morris, *Sartre's concept of a Person: An Analytic Approach* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1976) p.111

Sartre is aware that freedom is not absolute, insofar as we are always the product of a situation. The question that interests me is therefore: to what extent one is free to choose herself?

Sartre explains that the nature of the project is of one's own choosing. This means that I am fundamentally free to be *who* I want to be, for I am the architect of my existence. However, this form of freedom is not a synonym of infinite license. As Christina Howells indicates, it is on the contrary always seen "as a response to concrete and constraining circumstances"[119]. Freedom should therefore be thought as resistance; it is the resistance to a situation, the resistance to facticity. On could say also that freedom is both absolute and limited. For Sartre, the choosing is absolute because spontaneous, that is, not "relative to circumstance time and place[120]". But the chosen is limited.

Hence, I cannot be whatever or whoever I want, just because I want it. *What* I am influences *who* I am, which means, in other words, that the (socio-cultural) situation that precedes me defines me to a certain extent, and that I am then left with the choice to accept, refuse or surpass my condition. I do not choose my body, my name, my nationality, or my birthplace, for example, but these details contribute to the constitution of myself as individual. These details form *what* I am, but do not determine me, for I can choose to go beyond my situation and transform — or sublimate— myself through the construction of a project, that is, of an ideal self. Whatever I do in relation to this situation will inevitably be my choice, and therefore, my ultimate responsibility. Hence, Sartre still defends freedom as the truth of human existence. Such defense of freedom shall not be viewed as simple naivety[121], but as the illustration of his concern to "refute determinism[122]".

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[119] Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.23

[120] Yiwei Zheng, *Ontology and Ethics in Sartre's Early Philosophy* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005) p.43

[121] Nina Power in *The Continuum Companion to Continental Philosophy*, eds. John Mullarkey and Beth Lord (London and New York: Continuum, 2009) p.292

[122] Thomas W. Busch, 'Self-making and Alienation: From Bad Faith to Revolution', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) p.164

As mentionned before, the realization of this ideal self is impossible. Hence, Sartre argues in *Being and Nothingness* that self is not a 'consistent articulation[123]', for the totalization of self can only occur in death. This means that while I am free to choose the direction of my existence, it is only when I die that I attain a form of essence[124]. When Sartre undertakes the writing of Jean Genet's and Gustave Flaubert's biographies, it is not to throw a new perspective about the life of these authors. The exercise rather stands as a recollection, an investigation procedure, which has for purpose the crystallization of Genet and Flaubert as finalized projects. If the fixation of self can only take place in death, it must be noted that this long desired self-coincidence also constitutes, quite cruelly, my "final alienation to others who are the only witness of it[125]". Until then, I am forced to exist as continuous deferral. Indeed, Sartre writes: "The self (…) represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence, of escaping identity while positing it as unity".[126]

Yet, this does not mean that the project I assigned to myself shall be viewed in terms of a programmed failure or as an absurdity. As Phyllis Sutton-Morris notes, Sartre's conception of the project is less concerned about its completion than its elaboration. In fact, it must be thought as the key to make sense of the world. It is a mean of orientation:

> This ideal self is the ultimate end or fundamental point of all our actions, unless we choose another project; it is the relation of co-personality that unites our actions and our experiences into coherent patterns. The fundamental project is the ultimate end in terms of which we give reasons and make decisions; it is, in other words, the key to whatever rationality we exhibit. The choice of ideal self is also a "discovery of the world" in the sense that it serves as the point of our classification of things in the world as instruments, and the point of our classification of past events as meaningful[127].

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[123] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.123
[124] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) pp. xxx–xxxi
[125] Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.24
[126] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.123
[127] Phyllis Sutton Morris, *Sartre's concept of a Person: An Analytic Approach* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1976) p.111-112

The fundamental project of existence is the expression of a desire to be. Though deceptive, this desire must be cultivated and pursued because it enables the individual to develop a meaningful existence. Hence, one should view the project as a means of "deliverance and salvation[128]". But to pursue this conversion to authentic life, one must undertake what Sartre calls an existential psychoanalysis.

I will thus show in the next section that Sartre's concern for the self leads him to refine his conception of the fundamental project within the frame of psychoanalysis.

1.6 EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOANALYSIS

Sartre's incursion to the field of psychoanalysis brings a lot of difficulties. For instance: why would Sartre adopt a discourse that, for most parts, claims that consciousness has hidden motives which are lying in the deeper structures of the psyche/unconscious, when, as an existential phenomenologist, he argues that "there is no ego, no superego and id", but only a "bodily lived consciousness grasping the world in this way or that[129]"? Such interest for psychoanalysis may be puzzling and untenable with Sartre's earlier philosophy. Yet, behind these contradictions lies the attempt to refine his model of individuation.

As suggested above, Sartre's thoughts on consciousness are incompatible with the psychoanalytic discourse, for he argued in the past that consciousness is transparent to itself. He thus rejected the Freudian account of the unconscious, for this was for him just an illustration of bad faith, an excuse for the individual to flee away from her responsibilities as a radically free person. There is nothing hidden concerning selfhood, argues Sartre. But in 1971, Sartre does not consider himself as a philosopher

[128] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.412 (footnote)
[129] Betty Cannon, 'Psychoanalysis and Existential Psychoanalysis', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key Concepts*, eds. Steven Churchill and Jack Reynolds, (Durham; Acumen, 2013) p.81

of absolute freedom and acknowledges the power of circumstances[130]. Thus, his thoughts came to be more nuanced towards psychoanalysis[131]. During his interview with Michel Contat for *Le Monde*, Sartre declares that one may not be predetermined, but predestined to accomplish certain types of action according to the situation one was born into. As such, one is not completely free, insofar as choices are in fact conditioned options[132]. In this respect, Sartre asserts the self as being the product of social forces, and moves away from his conception of self as a mere collection of decisions. Without discarding his early work, Sartre wants to put the stress on external constraints and dig further on the limits imposed by facticity. His work thus acknowledges that individuals are entangled in situations, embedded in a specific culture or period of time, which conditions them and restrict their liberties. In this respect, we do not always have choices, but we still have options. If Sartre is more nuanced it is due to his growing interest in Marxism[133]. In fact, the Sartre of *Existentialism is a Humanism* and of *Being and Nothingness* was, as he acknowledges himself, the prisoner of a certain ideal of freedom, conditioned by the social malaise of the Second World War and the issue of Resistance [134].

Sartre sketches in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* a vision of the individual more permeable to its social environment. But it would be wrong to accuse the philosopher of dissolving the subject into the determinations of the material framework

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[130] Thomas W. Busch, 'Self-making and alienation: from bad faith to revolution', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key concepts,* eds. Stephen Churchill and Jack Reynolds (Durham: Acumen 2013) p.164

[131] Sartre's interest for psychoanalysis is not brand new. We already find in *Being and Nothingness* a slight psychoanalytical tone when Sartre is speaking the possibility of "radical conversion", which I will mention again in the next couple of pages.

[132] Orignal quote : D'une certaine façon nous naissons tous prédestinés. Nous sommes voués à un certain type d'action dès l'origine par la situation où se trouvent la famille et la société à un moment donné (…) La prédestination, c'est ce qui remplace chez moi le déterminisme : je considère que nous ne sommes pas libres — tout au moins provisoirement, aujourd'hui— puisque nous sommes aliénés. On se perd toujours dans l'enfance : les méthodes d'éducation, le rapport parents-enfant, l'enseignement, etc., tout cela donne un moi, mais un moi perdu (…) Cela ne veut pas dire que cette prédestination ne comporte aucun choix, mais on sait qu'en choisissant on ne réalisera pas ce qu'on a choisi : c'est ce que j'appelle la nécessité de la liberté. Par exemple, Flaubert n'était pas tout à fait conditionné à choisir l'écriture. C'est venu petit à petit à partir du moment où il a appris à lire (…) Tout est joué d'avance : il reste à Gustave des options, mais des options conditionnées.
Sartre, *Situations X*, *Entretiens sur moi-même*, Sartre (Paris : Gallimard, 1976) p.99

[133] See Nik Farrell Fox, *The New Sartre* (New York, London; Continuum, 2003)

[134] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre; Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare and Simone De Beauvoir* (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006) p.5

(*practico-inert*). The themes of individuality, autonomy and responsibility remain essential to his work, though they are reinterpreted through the socio-material prism of Marxism[135].

> After the war came the true experience, that of society. But I think it was necessary for me to pass via the myth of heroism first. That is to say, the pre-war personage who was more or less Stendhal's egotistical individualist had to be plunged into circumstances against his will, yet where he still had the power to say yes or no, in order to encounter inextricable entanglements of the post-war years as a man totally conditioned by his social existence and yet sufficiently capable of decision to reassume all this conditioning and to become responsible for it. For the idea which I have never ceased to develop is that in the end one is always responsible for what is made of one. Even if one can do nothing else besides assume this responsibility. For I believe that a man can always make something out of what is made of him[136].

The fact that I am not purely free, but conditioned by a web of situations that pre-exist and influence the person I am, as well as the way, I interiorize social rituals, relations of production, historical past and contemporary institutions[137], does not invalidate the figure of the individual as responsible agent. But insofar as freedom is coextensive with responsibility, the latter shall itself be understood as limited by structural causations and factical conditions. While Sartre used to reject the finalism deployed through the Freudian discourse of the unconscious, he comes to acknowledge, for example, that one can live in disguise[138]. One can be misled, confused, and become the prisoner of his or her actions. After all, actions are the exteriorization of the individual's interiorization of the practico-inert. To transcend the practico-inert and not be glued in determinism, the individual should develop weapons. This weapon is self-knowledge, that is, the elaboration of a personal project through which I can transcend, without negating my material configuration.

In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre claims that one must go through a "radical conversion[139]," if one wants to live out her freedom. The later Sartre rather suggests is

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[135] See Nik Farrell Fox, *The New Sartre*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2003)
[136] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre; Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare and Simone De Beauvoir* (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006) p.6-7
[137] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre; Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare and Simone De Beauvoir* (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006) p.8
[138] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre; Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare and Simone De Beauvoir* (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006) p.12
[139] In a footnote, Sartre writes: "These considerations do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation. But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we can not discuss here." See: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*,

that it is only in undertaking an investigation upon myself, that I can tend to *a form* of freedom. This means that if the late Sartre is more pessimistic regarding the actual achievement of freedom, he seems to have faith in the practice of introspection as the realization of autonomy. The self is therefore not reducible to the sphere of visible actions as it was the case in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, but to the profundity of the 'fundamental project' which must be 'revealed' to me. Towards the end of his life, Sartre will embrace this process of self-explicitation more explicitly. [140] However, this discourse of revelation may sound odd on many levels because of its spiritual character. It also exemplifies well my earlier concerns when I said that Sartre's interest for psychoanalysis is entangled in lots of contradictions regarding his philosophy of self, supposedly transparent. But the difficulty can be avoided if one takes in consideration, as Christina Howells does, the difference between consciousness and awareness[141]. Here, revelation should be understood as the development of awareness, which therapeutics is concerned about.

As Howells indicates, the separation in Sartre between consciousness and knowledge/awareness (*savoir*) forces him to progressively admit a form of 'inhabited' consciousness[142]. Moreover, it leads Sartre to reckon the existence of a hidden stream of consciousness. It is true that Sartre attacks the Freudian dichotomy between the conscious (what is known to me) and the unconscious (as mere repression of the known) which he sees it as a form of bad faith, that is, an excuse from the individual to escape his condition of free subject. But he will later become more sympathetic with the work of Lacan. While Freud makes of the unconscious a real consistent, located at the back of the individual's memories, a set of obscures symbols and desires which have lust for finality, Lacan thinks the unconscious primarily in terms of transindividual discourse. And it seems that Sartre agrees on the importance of the relation between the subject and language as a revealing tool:

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trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.412

[140] Sartre: "I'm talking about things I know. There is always a kind of little fringe that is not said, and who does not want to be told, but who wants to be known by me".
Original quote : "Je parle de choses que je sais. Il y a toujours une espèce de petite frange qui n'est pas dite, et qui ne veut pas être dite, mais qui veut être sue, sur par moi", Sartre, *Situations X, Entretiens sur moi-même*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1976) p.143-144

[141] Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom,* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sidney; Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.147

[142] Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom,* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sidney; Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.152

> As far as I am concerned, Lacan has clarified the unconscious as a discourse which separates through language, or, if you prefer, as a counter finality of speech: verbal structures are organized as a structure of the practico-inert through the act of speaking. These structures express or constitute intentions which determine me without being mine[143].

Sartre then makes a contrast between the conscious and the lived (*le vécu*)[144]. The lived designates:

> …neither the refuges of the preconscious nor the unconscious, nor the conscious, but the area in which the individual is constantly swamped by himself, by his own riches, and where consciousness is shrewd enough to determine itself by forgetting (…) What I call the vécu is precisely the whole of the dialectical process of psychic life, a process which remains necessarily opaque to itself for it is a constant totalization, and a totalization which cannot be conscious of what it is. One may be conscious, in fact, of an external totalization, but not of a totalization which also totalizes consciousness. In this sense, the vécu is always susceptible of understanding, never of knowledge[145].

As such, what separates the lived and the conscious is what separates understanding from knowledge. It is evident in this respect that Sartre appeals for the cultivating of the self, insofar as his model of existential psychoanalysis aims at the developing of the conscious relation with oneself. It is by the means of this conscious relation that the individual can develop a certain knowledge of herself. This knowledge is never objective or complete. For Sartre, one will always have an oblique account of herself,

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[143] As quoted and translated by Christina Howells in *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sidney; Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.259
Original quote : "Pour moi, Lacan a clarifié l'inconscient en tant que discours qui sépare à travers le langage ou, si l'on préfère, en tant que contre-finalité de la parole ; des ensembles verbaux se structurent comme ensemble pratico-inerte à travers l'acte de parler. Ces ensembles expriment ou constituent des intentions qui me déterminent sans être miennes. "
Sartre, *Situations IX*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1972) p.97

[144] The lived will constitutes the crux of his biography on Flaubert. He declares in his interview with Michel Contat:
"Pour moi cela représente, si vous voulez, l'équivalent de conscient-inconscient, c'est-à-dire que je ne crois toujours pas à l'inconscient sous certaines formes, bien que la conception chez Lacan soit plus intéressante…J'ai voulu donner l'idée d'un ensemble dont la surface est tout à fait consciente et dont le reste est opaque à cette consciente et, sans être de l'inconscient, vous est caché. Quand je montre comment Flaubert ne se connaît pas lui-même et comment en même temps il se comprend admirablement, j'indique ce que j'appelle le vécu, c'est-à-dire la vie en compréhension avec soi-même, sans que ce soit indiquée une connaissance, une conscience thétique. Cette notion de vécu est un outil dont je me sers mais que je n'ai pas encore théorisé. Je le ferais bientôt. Si vous voulez, chez Flaubert, le vécu c'est quand il parle des illuminations qu'il a et qui le laissent ensuite dans l'ombre sans qu'il puisse retrouver les chemins. D'une part, il est dans l'ombre avant et dans l'ombre après, mais, d'autre part, il y a le moment où il a vu ou compris quelque chose sur lui-même. "
Sartre, *Situations X*, *Entretiens sur moi-même*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1976) p.110-111

[145] As quoted and translated by Christina Howells, *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom,* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sidney: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.258

but existential psychoanalysis enables the individual to be as conscious as possible of one's choices.

At this stage, another distinction must be made. It is indeed not enough to define existential psychoanalysis as the conscious relation of self by the self, for example. To be more precise, Sartre argues that while I am in a certain sense always *conscious* of my project, I am not necessarily *aware* of it. Yet, this shall not be interpreted as a return to the theory of the unconscious. Sartre is not a Freudian; he does not believe in the unconscious (which he reads as *non-conscious*). It is on the contrary the fundamental property of consciousness to be conscious. As such, the *un-conscious* —for the phenomenologist he is— is an absurdity. On the other hand, consciousness does not equate knowledge. This means that despite the fact that I ineluctably live my freedom on a pre-reflective level, there is no guarantee of me possessing any reflective awareness of it: "Thus, the first effect of existentialism is to make every man conscious of what he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence"[146]. Such awareness does not make me *more* free, insofar as it cannot suddenly liberate me from social constraints, but it gives me the possibility to rediscover the freedom I already have. As such, it makes me more authentic.

In short, Sartre argues that the individual is not originally aware of her fundamental project. But the observance of one's past actions may help one to unravel it. The project one has assigned to oneself already exudes from one's doings. In this respect, existential psychoanalysis is the attempt to grasp one's fundamental project, understood that this project has its origins in "the background-depth of all my thoughts and feelings[147]". Finally, if Sartre defends existential therapeutics, it is because the individual has, by the means of psychoanalysis, the opportunity to embrace her past as a series of choices. To be able to do so would, according to Sartre, free the individual from the belief that she is the mere product of social/ psychological/ familial conditioning[148].

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[146] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philippe Mairet (London; Methuen&co, 1948) p.23

[147] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.141

[148] Betty Cannon, 'Psychoanalysis and Existential Psychoanalysis', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Key Concepts*, eds. Steven Churchill and Jack Reynolds, (Durham; Acumen, 2013) p.82-83

1.7 KEY POINTS

The aim of the section was to show how Sartre approaches the theme of individuation. As I have highlighted throughout the chapter, he rejects the notion of a substansive self. In this respect, selfhood is not innate to the individual's essence, nor is it set as its transcendental feature. Instead, the self is produced through the unifying activity of consciousness. The other key point to remember is the following; since our radical freedom (which lies in the spontaneity of consciousness) leaves us with no choice other than being responsible, Sartre's conception of selfhood is less concerned by who we are, but by who we *ought* to be. Sartre then develops an existential psychoanalysis. For Sartre, such existential therapy does not involve the revelation of the repressed. It is instead understood as the clarification of the hidden, through which one learns to make of herself an object of knowledge and/or language. The next chapter proposes to investigate further the theme of the aesthetics of self-constitution in relation to Foucault's work on subjectivation.

II- SARTRE AND FOUCAULT: ON THE AESTHETICS OF SELF-CONSTITUTION

The purpose of this section will be to develop the issue of subjectivation in Sartre's work while undertaking a comparison with the work of the late Foucault on the same issue. As such, my reading will be largely inspired by the contributions of Nick Farrell Fox on *The New Sartre*. Though aware of Sartre's and Foucault's philosophical incompatibilities, this chapter aims to draw continuities between the two figures through the theme of the aesthetics of self-constitution. I would like to show in this respect that Sartre's notion of the project can be thought as a technique of self.

For the purpose of my argument, I will mostly focus (though not exclusively) on the 'late Foucault'[149]. I will start with an overall appreciation of Foucault's famous disagreements with Sartre. After that, I will elaborate on Foucault's reading of the aesthecization of the subject. In doing so, I will jump back to Sartre in order to present *Words* as an early theorization of a technique of existence in which Sartre defends an aesthetics of self-constitution which, I believe, Foucault could have been sympathetic to. The chapter will end on the circumstances of the constitution of the subject through the interplay of power and freedom using Sartre's least existentialist work: *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

My argument is the following: both Sartre and Foucault argue for the creative construction of the individual. But while Sartre's ethics remains turned towards an egological ethics of commitment that revolves around the necessity of freedom;

[149] In the introduction, I have stressed that Foucault's work can divisible into three significant periods; that of archaeology, genealogy and ethics. This distinction is accepted by most scholars, yet some disagree. For example, Colin Koopman suggest that such division is unnecessary and that Foucault's body of work is homogeneous, insofar as his overall project remain in "the critical tradition of Kant". I will play it safe by acknowledging the existence of three Foucaults (that can also be referred as the epistemic, the political and the ethical Foucault, the latter being the object of my interest here). See: Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p.18

Foucault's ethics of subjectivation puts the emphasis on power at the cost of freedom. As we will see in the next chapter, Stiegler intends for his part to politicize the issue of self-cultivation in order to reactivate the possibility for democratic freedom.

2.1 SARTRE AND FOUCAULT: RIVALRIES AND INCOMPATIBILITIES

Sartre's and Foucault's philosophical disagreements are justly famous. In an interview for *L'Arc* in autumn 1966, Sartre accuses Foucault and the Structuralists of promoting a new ideology and of abstracting the concept of the subject for the hegemony of impersonal forms and signs.[150] He also calls his successor "the last barrier the bourgeoisie can still erect against Marx". Foucault responds to this criticism with a pinch of irony:

> I would say two things in response. First, Sartre is a man with too much important work to do — literary, philosophical, political — to have the time to read my book. In fact, he hasn't read it. Consequently, what he says about it can't seem very pertinent to me. Secondly, I'll confess something to you. I was in the Communist Party some time ago for a few months, or a little more than several months, and at that time Sartre was defined for us as the last rampart of bourgeois imperialism, the last stone of the edifice, etc. So it's with amused astonishment that I find this phrase coming from Sartre's pen now, fifteen years later. Let's say that he and I have turned around the same axis[151].

And when Sartre reproaches Foucault for showing contempt for the concept of history, Foucault declares that he would be delighted if he managed to kill what he sees as a "philosophical myth of history[152]", arguing that, on the other hand, his work has been well received by historians. As such, it has usually been common for scholars to oppose the two thinkers, for the first is famous for perpetrating the Cartesian tradition, which revolves around the *cogito* as the foundation of knowledge, while the second is popular for asserting the co-relation of the political body and discursivity. On his supposed Cartesian allegiance, Sartre admits to being a Frenchman "imbued with a certain rationalism[153]", a rationalism that, according to him, culminates in *Being and*

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[150] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', *L'arc* issue 30, 1966.
[151] Michel Foucault, 'Foucault responds to Sartre', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.40
[152] Michel Foucault, 'Foucault responds to Sartre', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.41
[153] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought' in *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre; Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare and Simone De Beauvoir* (London, New York, Calcutta; Seagull Books, 2006) p.11

Nothingness, in which he describes the *cogito* as 'the sole secure point of departure[154]'. Sartre's attachment to the absolute autonomy of the individual brought about a number of criticisms from his contemporaries[155].

This general incomprehension continued with the next generation of thinkers who held a certain grudge and disdain for Sartre and his classic existentialism. For example, it is in the attempt to break with the discourse of the ontological individual, the choice, the notion of responsibility and the dynamic between the question of essence and existence, that structuralism came to emerge as a form of anti-humanism. However, Sartre's views on ontological freedom may have been exaggerated, especially over time, precisely because of this need for the French scene of the second half of the twentieth century to assert its independence towards the philosopher's influence.[156] Articles such as Lyotard's "A Success of Sartre's[157]" illustrate well the conflictual atmosphere of the time. Indeed, Lyotard reproaches his predecessor for having produced a number of 'unworthy texts[158]' and remembers his reading of *Being and Nothingness* as having been a quite unpleasant experience [159].

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[154] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956) p.244

[155] Such as Claude Lévi-Strauss who writes:

> He who begins by steeping himself in the allegedly self-evident truths of introspection never emerges from them. Knowledge of men sometimes seems easier to those who allow themselves to be caught up in the snare of personal identity. But they thus shut the door on knowledge of man: written or unavowed 'confessions' form the basis of all ethnographic research. Sartre in fact becomes the prisoner of his Cogito: Descartes made it possible to attain universality, but conditionally on remaining psychological and individual; by sociologizing the Cogito, Sartre merely exchanges one prison for another. Each subject's group and period now take the place of timeless consciousness.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London; Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966) p.249

[156] See Jack Reynolds and Ashley Woodward, 'Existentialism and Poststructuralism: Some Unfashionable Observations', in *The Continuum Companion of Existentialism*, eds. Felicity Joseph, Jack Reynolds and Ashley Woodward (London: Continuum, 2011)

[157] Jean-François Lyotard, 'A Success of Sartre's', foreword in D. Hollier, *The Politics of Prose: Essay on Sartre*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)

[158] Jean-François Lyotard, 'A Success of Sartre's', foreword in D. Hollier, *The Politics of Prose: Essay on Sartre*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) p. XI

[159] Jean-François Lyotard, 'A Success of Sartre's', foreword in D. Hollier, *The Politics of Prose: Essay on Sartre*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) p. XI-XII

We mostly remember Sartre for his bold claims such as 'existence precedes essence' or 'hell is other people'. Yet, we tend to forget that Sartre changed his views on multiple occasions. Despite his attempts to "provide a philosophical foundation for realism" and "to give man both his autonomy and his reality among real objects[160]", Sartre eventually reframed his discourse around the circularity between praxis and matter in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Thus, he says:

> I posed the problem in this way because I was ignorant of dialectical materialism, although I should add that this later allowed me to assign certain limits to it — to validate the historical dialectic while rejecting a dialectic of nature, in the sense of a natural process which produces and resolves man into an ensemble of physical laws[161].

It is true that throughout his writings, Sartre consistently argued that a human being can always make something out of what is made of her, hereby continuing to place the subject's freedom at the center of his philosophy. But he is also forced to acknowledge that "man constructs signs because in his very reality he is signifying[162]". This means that the individual is not only a producer, but an object produced through social relations, that is, through a signifying system conditioning, modelling and constituting the individual as a person:

> The world is outside; language and culture are not inside the individual like stamps registered by his nervous system. It is the individual who is inside culture and inside language; that is, inside a special section of the field of instruments[163].

The fact that Sartre conflates the subject with history is a good example of the shift from absolute freedom to situated freedom. In *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*, Sartre acknowledges indeed that freedom is never total but operates within the limits of a situation, and "it is this situation that must be modified from top to bottom[164]", implying that individual freedom necessitates the freedom of others and is always enacted within the present social order. The contingent social

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[160] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', in *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre; Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare and Simone De Beauvoir* (London, New York, Calcutta; Seagull Books, 2006) p.11

[161] ibid, p.11

[162] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1963) p.152

[163] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1963) p.113

[164] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: an exploration of the etiology of hate,* trans. George J. Becker (New York; Schocken Books, 1948) p.107

arrangements form what Sartre calls the practico-inert. It is a web of meanings and past experiences that are sedimented and interiorized by the cultural/political order. Such a frame limits and circumscribes the individual's freedom, so one cannot be purely free, but free in relation to a certain context.

Freedom is always in tension between the praxis (the individual's spontaneous action) and the inert (inorganic matter). In this respect, the individual's autonomy is conditioned, but not dominated or overpowered by the inertness of the situation she is entangled within. This means that even though the later Sartre of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* may seem to 'dissolve the subject into the structures that traverse her[165]', as is observed by Christina Howells, Sartre is actually striving to maintain both poles of *man-as-producer* and *man-as-product* in his conception of subjectivity and individuality[166]. In this respect, Sartre is still 'resolutely refusing to slip into an easy acceptance of either thesis or anti-thesis', so that his notion of the subject may be 'deferred or deconstructed, but is not relinquished[167]', Howells argues. This dialectic of transcendence and facticity constitutes the crux of Sartre's model of selfhood and invites us to think of his work as something in-between the humanism of existentialism —that which asserts the individual as the origin of meaning— and the determinism of structuralism —which, roughly put, claims that the system precedes and produces the subject.

[165] Christina Howells, 'Conclusion: Sartre and the deconstruction of the subject', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.342
[166] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Itinerary of a Thought', in *Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre; Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser, Quintin Hoare and Simone De Beauvoir* (London, New York, Calcutta; Seagull Books, 2006) p.7
[167] Christina Howells, 'Conclusion: Sartre and the deconstruction of the subject', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.342

2.2 FOUCAULT AND THE SUBJECT

Foucault's approach intends to articulate a history of problems, of tensions, of conflicts, as well as it intends to articulate a history of solutions to these very problems. Hence, what draws Foucault's attention is how these *problems* have emerged or disappeared or been transformed, arranged and rearranged, deconstructed and reconstructed, through time. Foucault's intuition is that to each problem corresponds a historical shift, whether this shift is sudden or progressive. The cultural acceptance of the inner self is one of them[168]. The goal of Foucault's enterprise, as explains Colin Koopman, is to provide a "diagnosis of the difficulties that motivate the continued elaboration of ourselves in the present[169]". By "problematization", Foucault does not mean to decipher an inner truth beyond power and discursivity. Power and discursivities are what ground truth itself, insofar as truth is *produced* within a field of constraints and not simply *discovered*. It is therefore those processes of production that Foucault is interested in, whether they concern knowledge or the subject. But during his early career, Foucault did not give much importance to the subject as a determining principle of knowledge formation. Indeed the archeological method intended to question the conditions of possibilities of knowledge. Genealogy, on the other hand, examined the production of regimes of truths and the effects of power. In

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[168] Foucault writes:

> We have passed from a pleasure to be recounted and heard, centering on the heroic or marvelous narration of "trials" of bravery or sainthood, to a literature ordered according to the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage. Whence too this new way of philosophizing: seeking the fundamental relation to the true, not simply in oneself-in some forgotten knowledge, or in a certain primal trace-but in the self-examination that yields, through a multitude of fleeting impressions, the basic certainties of consciousness. The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, 'is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, "demands" only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation.

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980) p.59-60

[169] Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p.219

other words, archaeology focused on the discursive, whereas genealogy revolved around the body.

As such, Foucault was very harsh towards Sartre's work. He did not hesitate to describe the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* as "the magnificent and pathetic effort of a man of the nineteenth century to think the twentieth[170]". In retrospect, it could be said that Sartre's major influence in the intellectual scene did not leave Foucault much choice other than that of accepting to live in his shadow or break away from the existentialist heritage. The issue will be to find out whether the return to the question of the subject in the late Foucault could be interpreted as the taking up of a Sartrean legacy[171].

While we can reunite Sartre and Foucault together regarding their understanding of the constitution of the self, I do not wish to draw naive conclusions. It is not because Sartre acknowledges the power of social determinations that he can be qualified as Foucauldian before Foucault, and it is not my intention to say so. Sartre comes from a tradition (namely phenomenology) that still posits the I as key founder of experience. On Foucault's philosophical position Beatrice Han argues: "Foucault's definition clearly seeks to break with the philosophical tradition that subordinates experience (be it as *Erfarhung* or *Erlebnis*) to subjectivity in order to give it an objective definition[172]." As such, Foucault understands the subject as constituted within structures of power and knowledge. If perhaps, one can perceive a similar process of in Sartre's acknowledgement of *man-as-product* and *man-as-producer*[173],

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[170] Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits 1954-1988* 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) volume 1, p.541-541

[171] To describe Foucault as Sartrean does not sound that antinomic, for they share few things in common: "Like Sartre, Foucault began from a relentless hatred of bourgeois society and culture and with a spontaneous sympathy for marginal groups such as the mad, homosexuals, and prisoners. They both also had strong interests in literature and psychology as well as philosophy, and both, after an early relative lack of political interest, became committed activists". See the Stanford Encyclopedia article on Foucault: Gary Gutting, and Johanna Oksala, 'Michel Foucault', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/foucault/

[172] Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford, California; Stanford University Press, 2002) p.155

[173] I says that it is a possibility, but I do not think that the term "co-extensivity" suits Sartre's philosophy very well. The dynamics tying the individual to the situation is dialectical in the sense that they may form and deform each other, but are not giving birth to each other and expanding through each other. Besides, Sartre's philosophical approach tends, for most parts, to abstract the subject from its concrete environment, as if the subject was more a metaphysical residue than a historical product (which may be

Foucault's approach remains slightly different by focusing on circuits of production, in which human beings participate. In other words, Foucault's analysis aims at the impersonal; it thus favors an analysis of relationships. Sartre's interest, on the other hand, revolves first and foremost on the experience of the individual. Besides, Foucault describes relations, whereas Sartre tends to assign a value (whether negative or positive[174]) to these processes.

Regarding the conception of the subject, Foucault is reluctant to acknowledge the transcendental "I"[175], as he wishes to distance himself from earlier philosophical traditions, which posit the human essentially through the equation subject-consciousness[176].

> In all my work I strive instead to avoid any reference to this transcendental as a condition of possibility for any knowledge. When I say that I strive to avoid it, I don't mean that I am sure of succeeding. My procedure at this moment is of a regressive sort, I would say; I try to assume a greater and greater detachment in order to define the historical conditions and transformations of our knowledge. I try to historicize to the utmost in order to leave as little space as possible to the transcendental. I cannot exclude the possibility that one day I will have to confront an irreducible residuum which will be, in fact, the transcendental[177].

In this respect, Foucault is not a phenomenologist. While phenomenology may be interpreted as "the attempt to think man from the point of view of man[178]", the aim of the archeological method is to liberate fields of discursivity from anthropocentric accounts. For example, as notes Andrew Cutrofello, Foucault does not use the notion of "historical a priori" the same way as Husserl. It has "nothing to do with conscious intentions". Hence, Cutrofello explains that "whereas for Husserl the task of the

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a consequence of Sartre's self-confessed Cartesianism). If his late work aims to place back the subject in its socio-historical situation, I believe that it is insofar as the two remain thought independently from each other.

[174] My understanding of positivity and negativity in this precise section shall not be understood as a synonym for moral conceptions of right and wrong or good and evil. My point is that Sartre's understanding of Man-as-producer expresses the assertion of spontaneous freedom, while Man-as-product is viewed as the limitation of that very freedom. It is in that that I perceive these definitions being positive and negative. The same way "value" shall be heard here as a synonym for connotation, more than as a deep philosophical concept.

[175] Michel Foucault, 'Historian of culture', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.78

[176] especially from the 17th (with Descartes) up to the 20th century (culminating with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty)

[177] Michel Foucault, 'Historian of culture', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, , ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.79

[178] Andrew Cutrofello, *Continental Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005) p.87

genetic phenomenologist was to reconstruct the process by which successive strata of the historical a priori were laid down by a living consciousness, for Foucault the task of the archeologist is to treat textual marks as indicative "monuments" rather than as expressive "documents""[179]. This difference of interpretation, I believe, is crucial to note, for it seems that Stiegler, who positions himself in a lineage deriving from Foucault, understands the historical a priori in the way Husserl does. In that sense, Stiegler's conception of the subject could be said closer to Sartre's than Foucault's.

Unlike Foucault, Sartre thinks the textual mark as expressive rather than indicative. In this respect, he makes of language an object connected to psychology, insofar as mental mechanisms and the formation of the laws of language remain intertwined:

> Because we are men and because we live in the world of men, of work, and of conflicts, all the objects which surround us are signs. By themselves they indicate their use and scarcely mask the real project of those who have made them such for us and who address us through them. But their particular ordering, under this or that circumstance, retraces for us an individual action, a project, an event (…) Signification comes from man and from his project, but they are inscribed everywhere in things and in the order of things. Everything at every instant is signifying and significations reveal to us men and relations among men across the structures of our society. But these significations appear to us only insofar as we ourselves are signifying[180].

Such psychological aspect of language was rejected by the early Foucault who tried in the *Archelogy of Knowledge* to grasp discourse in its manifest existence, that is, to analyze it as an independent system of functioning;

> One must be able to make an historical analysis of the transformation of discourse without having recourse to the thought of men, to their mode of perception, their habits and the influences to which they have submitted[181].

This approach appears very structuralist insofar as structuralism, instead of focusing on the correspondence between mind and world, intends to show that meaning is extra-subjective and that language deploys a system of signification independent from human action. Yet, Foucault did not like being associated to the structuralist

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[179] Andrew Cutrofello, *Continental Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005) p.87

[180] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1963) p.155-6

[181] Michel Foucault, 'The Archeology of Knowledge', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.47

movement and deplored being labeled as such by public opinion[182]. While he agrees that formal relationships can exist and operate when the subject is not truly conscious, and while he reckons that with linguistics, logic and ethnology, "one arrives at the discovery of a sector which stands outside consciousness", he refuses to think these structures as an ahistorical whole.

Foucault's philosophy takes a new turn when focusing on the technologies of the self. This shift of interest from power relations to the subject left scholars perplexed. It appears indeed that the concerns of the late Foucault have little to do with the concerns of the early Foucault, whose aim was, at that time, to develop an archaeo-genealogical method for analyzing discursivity, power, and regimes of production[183]. But tired of being branded as a mere thinker of power relations, or a historian of truth, insofar as truth is a discourse constructed in the *episteme*[184] of a civilization, Foucault declared in 1984 that the nature of his investigations should rather be understood as the attempt to think subjectivation as "the process through which results the constitution of a subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity which is obviously only one of the given possibilities of organizing a consciousness of self"[185]. If, on the one hand, he does not intend to minimize the importance of power in the circuits of production and signification, he acknowledges, on the other hand, that the notion of the subject still demands our attention [186].

As such, Foucault's understanding of the subject still offers an account of power, insofar as the two are co-expansive and that the history of subjectivity is also

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[182] Michel Foucault, 'An Historian of culture', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.80

[183] Garry Gutting, 'Introduction, Foucault: A User's Manual', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.4

[184] Episteme should not be understood as mere historical category but rather as a set of "relationships which existed between the various sectors of science during a given epoch". Michel Foucault 'An Historian of culture', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.76

[185] Michel Foucault, 'The Return of Morality', in *Foucault Live; interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.330

[186] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in *Essentials Works of Foucault; Power 1954-1984*, volume three, eds. Paul Rabinow, James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley,(New York, The New Press, 2001) , p.326

the history of modes of objectivation of the subject[187]. While the genealogy of morals he proposes to rearticulate in the *History of Sexuality* puts the stress on the aesthetic of existence, this concern for the aesthetics of the subject is tied with the question of ethics. As such, it interrogates the process of self-fashioning through the scope of governmentality. Arnold I. Davidson notes that:

> On one hand, Foucault wanted to criticize current conceptions of power that, in one way or another, perceived current conceptions of power as a unitary system, a critique undertaken most thoroughly in *Discipline and Punish* and volume 1 of *History of Sexuality*. On the other hand, Foucault wanted to analyze power as a domain of strategic relations between individuals and groups, relation whose strategies were to govern the conduct of these individuals[188].

In this respect, Foucault's concern for the self is directed towards the *technologies* of the self. By technologies of the self are understood all the ways and forms in which one governs her thoughts and conduct. Foucault's interest for the cultivation of the self culminates in the third volume of *History of Sexuality*, titled 'Care of the Self'.

> The precept according to which one must give attention to oneself was in any case an imperative that circulated among a number of different doctrines. It also took the form of an attitude, a mode of behavior; it became instilled in ways of living; it evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught. It thus came to constitute a social practice, giving rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even to institutions. And it gave rise, finally, to a certain mode of knowledge and to the elaboration of a science. In the slow development of the art of living under the theme of the care of oneself, the first two centuries of the imperial epoch can be seen as the summit of a curve: a kind of golden age in the cultivation of the self-it being understood, of course, that this phenomenon concerned only the social groups, very limited in number, that were bearers of culture and for whose members *a techne tou biou* could have a meaning and a reality[189].

While I intend to elaborate further on care through a comparative reading of Foucault's and Stiegler's input on the topic, the aesthetics of the subject Foucault is discussing shall be viewed as a transformative practice turned towards self-mastery and self-awareness.

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[187] Arnold Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics and Ancient Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.118

[188] Arnold Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics and Ancient Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.118-119

[189] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Care of the Self,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York; Pantheon Books, 1986) p.44-45

Foucault's views on self-cultivation received strong criticisms from Pierre Hadot, himself a specialist in Ancient Philosophy. Hadot reproaches Foucault for romanticizing the principle of care in focusing too much on identity, selfhood and individuality, for the Greeks did not share the same understanding of the subject as we do today, and even less of the individual[190]. What the Greeks may have identified under the notion "self" was the idea of divine reason[191]. Besides, the exercise was not so much turned towards the transformation of self, but its surpassing[192], for the aim was to find harmony with the totality of the world. Read from this angle, it is difficult to imagine self-cultivation as a form of pleasure taken in oneself, for pleasure was not compatible with moral life[193]. Hence, Hadot maintains care as a universalization principle [194].

Hadot's expertise of Ancient thought leads him to recognize care as a rather austere ethical practice, regulated and rationalized, whereas Foucault's estheticism is valuing self-cultivation as a poietic experience. To create oneself as a work of art implies for the latter an ethics of self-enhancement. It is therefore not a quest for universal standards, as it is the case for Hadot. However, Foucault's ethics does not invite mere self-absorption, for the point of departure of care is the creative activity itself. James W. Bernauer and Michael Mahon write on this issue:

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[190] Deleuze elaborates on this issue and argues that the Greeks introduce an aesthetics of subjectivation, more than of the subject *per se*. While the term of "subject" resonates with modern subjectivity, we can largely assume that Foucault was aware of that. Besides, *History of Sexuality* focuses on modes of subjectivation, that is, on the set of practices through which one does transform herself, not on the subject *qua* consciousness. On this last note, Deleuze reminds us that if Foucault talks about memory (hence unveiling an Heideggerian dimension to his work through the double issue of memory and forgetting), he skilfully avoids the issue of consciousness. See: Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault,* trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis, London; University of Minnesota Press, 1988) p.107-108
And as we will see later, Stiegler will reproach Foucault for not having emphasized consciousness in his conception of bio-power and it is this underestimation of the theme of consciousness that will lead Stiegler to rethink bio-power through what he coins as psychopower.

[191] Arnold Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics and Ancient Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.121

[192] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold L. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford Uk, Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1995) p.207

[193] Hadot argues that Foucault confuses *volupta* (pleasure) with *gaudium* (joy). He thus writes: "If the Stoics insist on the word *gaudium*/ 'joy', it is precisely because they refuse to introduce the principle of pleasure into moral life. For them, happiness does not consist in pleasure, but in virtue itself, which is its own reward." See: Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold L. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford Uk, Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1995) p.207

[194] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold L. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford Uk, Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1995) p.211

> Foucault deprives the self of the illusion that it can separate itself from the world. Medical, economic, political and erotic dimensions of life shape the moral experience of the self, as his last work shows; thus, Foucault always presents his notion of self-formation as a struggle for freedom within the confines of a historical situation. The subject for Foucault is an "agonism", a "permanent provocation" to the knowledge-power-subjectivity relations to us. This agonistic self is "not the decontextualized self of inwardness, but a self that becomes autonomous through a stylization of the concrete possibilities that present themselves to us". Foucault's ethics is an invitation to a practice of liberty, to struggle and transgression, which seeks to open possibilities for new relations to self and events in the world[195].

Overall, when describing and analyzing the histories of madness, sexuality, government, clinical medicine, prison, disciplines and procedures of punishment, Foucault is dissecting the history of concepts, deciphering the unconscious of knowledge, and demonstrating how movements of thought are closely connected with the shaping of identity — in the sense that the conception of the human depends on intellectual structures and vice versa. The production of the subject is co-extensive with the socio-political body and the contemporary *episteme* she is embedded within. In this respect, *History of Sexuality* is no exception to the rule. If it first intended to study "the modes according to which individuals recognize themselves as sexual subjects", it does so in suggesting that these modes of subjectivation imply the recourse to discipline[196], which itself suggests the influence of regimes of power articulating discursivities of truth.

In his attempt to show how psyche, subjectivity, personality and consciousness are modelled through social procedures, Foucault aestheticizes less the individual than the whole circuits of power inherent to political life. Hence, my reading of Foucault does not suggest that he is reintroducing a philosophy of the subject, or reviving Sartre's legacy. On this point, I do not believe either that the ethical Foucault is incompatible with the epistemic and political Foucault[197], for all three seem, in my

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[195] James Bernauer and Michael Mahon, 'The Ethics of Michel Foucault', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.154

[196] The theme of discipline jumps from the context of the carceral to that of aesthetics, yet it is still the same discipline Foucault is talking about.

[197] Beatrice Han explains at length how Foucault's return to the subject stands in contradiction with his archaeology and genealogy. To her mind, Foucault's critical project is stuck between an empirical and transcendental account of the subject and leave scholars in an impasse. I do not deny that Foucault's account on the ethics of subjectivation is problematic, but at this stage, and for this specific argument, I am directly taking inspiration from Koopman who claims: "In sum, my claim is that reading critical problematization as Foucault's central philosophical task enables us to assess the periodization of his work from a new perspective. This new assessment helps us see why there is just one Foucault (a problematizing Foucault) rather than, as the standard stories have it, three (on one read, an epistemic Foucault, a political Foucault, and an ethical Foucault, and on another read, an early, middle, and late

view, to converge in the *History of Sexuality* in which the aesthetics of existence is itself an object of episteme and politics. Sartre, for his part, does not emphasize as much on the political dimension of the aesthetics of self-constitution. It remains mostly an egological experience, private and intimate, and sometimes, paranoiac. This is what I intend to cover in the next section.

2.3 THE SUBJECT IN SARTRE'S *WORDS*

Sartre was reluctant to proceed to a decentralization of the subject in language, which is precisely what he accuses the structuralists of doing[198]. Yet, as this section intends to demonstrate, he acknowledges the force of discourse as an instrument for self-constitution.

In his research on Flaubert and Jean Genet, Sartre admits, for example, that what interested him in the first place was the transformational process at stake between writing and one's own experience of identity, as he puts it himself:

> The reason why I produced *Les Mots* is the reason why I have studied Genet or Flaubert: how does a man becomes someone who writes, who wants to speak of the imaginary? This is what I sought to answer in my own case, as I sought it in that of others[199].

Thus, the aim of this section is to (almost) provide a text-commentary on Sartre's *Words* in order to bring to light major themes which find, in my point of view, a resonance with Foucault's conception of the aesthecization of the subject. Whereas Nick Farrell Fox suggests that *Words* is the theorization of Sartre's conception of identity formation through language[200], I am formulating a broader claim; it is the theorization of the process of individuation through technicity (whereas language is understood as itself a technique). The performativity of the text has been closely

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Foucault)". Cf: Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013) Introduction p.18

[198] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', *L'arc* issue 30, 1966.

[199] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'A plea for Intellectuals', in *Between Existentialism and Marxism: Sartre on Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, and the Arts*, trans. John Mattews (Pantheon Books: 1983)

[200] Nik Farrell Fox, *The New Sartre* (New York, London; Continuum, 2003) p.22

analysed by John F. Whitmire Jr[201], who regrets that "the shelf space devoted to *Words* among philosophers is notably small[202]" and I hope this section will reverse the trend.

The attempt to reconnect Sartre and Foucault on the theme of self-fashioning is not new, as it already was the focus of Phyllis Sutton-Morris' article on "Self-creating Selves", which stresses that:

> In his later work, Foucault not only shares with the early Sartre the view that there is no fixed original essence of an individual, but also shares the view that instead of seeking to discover a nonexistent, original, true self, one might engage in actively forming the self as a work of art[203].

Following Sutton-Morris' suggestions, I believe that Sartre's *Words* deploys many insightful ideas on the process of subjectivation that prefigure Foucault's views on care and the aesthecization of the subject. Whereas Sartre does not explicitly cover the issue of technologies of the self, we can reasonably assume that his farewell to literature was modelled through the prism of 'existential psychoanalysis', which revolves on the disclosure/adoption of the fundamental project. Yet, I am not going to focus on the concept of 'existential psychoanalysis' per se. Instead, I will argue that the development of the project of existence bears similarities with what Foucault has in mind when describing technologies of the self as an apparatus which "permits individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality".[204] Sartre's autobiography can thus be viewed as an attempt to theorize "this dialectical interdependence of the subject and language by

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[201] John F. Whitmire, 'The Double Writing of 'Les Mots': Sartre's 'Words' as Performative Philosophy', *Sartre Studies International*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2006, pp. 61–82. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23511004.

[202] John F. Whitmire, 'The Double Writing of 'Les Mots': Sartre's 'Words' as Performative Philosophy', *Sartre Studies International*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2006, pp. 61–82. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23511004. p.61

[203] Phyllis Sutton Morris 'Self-Creating Selves: Sartre and Foucault', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70, 4 (1997): 537–49.

[204]Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusets Press, 1988)

showing how identity is formed thought its expression in words"[205]. But I will show also, that while Sartre's account of subjectivity is constituted through a negative tension between the individual and her material environment, Foucault's description of power relations enables us to acknowledge the existence of some sort of positive outcome (even though Foucault does not necessarily think through the moral prism of negativity or positivity and remains mostly factual in his account of the constitution of the individual). To borrow Nick Farrell Fox's formulation, I argue that "the difference between the Sartrean and Foucauldian subject is not so much about the existence of a meaningful center (…), but the way this meaning is produced by the Sartrean subject in ontological-individual rather than in socio-linguistics terms"[206].

2.3.1 Words and Actions

> It seems to me, that all the so-called literature of the self— private diaries, narratives of the self, etc. — cannot be understood unless it is put into the general and very rich framework of these practices of the self. People have been writing about themselves for two thousands years, but not in the same way. I have the impression — I may be wrong— that there is a certain tendency to present the relationship between writing and the narrative of the self as a phenomenon particular to European modernity. Now, I would not deny it is modern, but it was also one of the first uses of writing. So it is not enough to say that the subject is constituted in a symbolic system. It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. It is constituted in real practices— historically analysable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them[207].

Words belongs to multiple genres. It is autobiographical, fictional, but also philosophical. Hence, the same way *No Exit* could be seen as a prolongation of the Sartrean approach on the objectification of the subject through the gaze of the other, echoing some passages of *Being and Nothingness*, *Words* theorizes the constitution of the subject through language and the process of learning. Furthermore, I will argue that Sartre offers us, knowingly or not, a method for the practice of the self. Thus, it seems appropriate to regard the book as a literary work of philosophy; a philosophical fiction which has for its main theme the writing of the self. Hence, *Words* is not so much about Sartre's childhood, but about the emergence of Sartre as individual. Said

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[205] Nik Farrell Fox, *The New Sartre*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2003) p.22
[206] Nik Farrell Fox, *The New Sartre*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2003) p.22
[207] Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: an Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York : Pantheon Books, 1984) p.369

otherwise, the text narrates the unfolding of Sartre-as-project. As a result, the structure of *Words* follows the essential steps of any regular process of self-transformation. The initial situation introduces an invisible character, whose name is never mentioned. Then, the young Sartre gains some consistency when discovering literature. It is through reading and writing that he acquires a sense of identity. In the final situation, the reader meets Sartre the grown man, Sartre-the-author, that is, the final product of the creative activity he chose to undertake and to commit to, all through his life. Hence, *Words* crystalizes Sartre's major claims regarding the self: it theorizes the concept of project as the constitution of the individual, as well as presenting the self as object of a creative activity, arguing for the inter-dependence of language, thought and selfhood. While it could be read as the performance of what Sartre has in mind by 'existential psychoanalytic', *Words* exemplifies overall his conception of literature as action by disclosure[208].

Given this context, *Words* emerges as a strong exemplar of the Foucauldian idea of aesthetic subjectivation. This is because the text, in its very title, suggests straight away the therapeutical dimension of Sartre's enterprise. Though the polysemy has been lost in the English translation, the original title *Les mots* (words) can be heard as *Les maux* (pain/trouble)[209]. Both curative and poisonous, *Words* echoes the pharmacological dimensions within the process of writing. It is through writing that Sartre's encounters himself. Before that "there was only a play of mirrors[210]", as he confesses throughout the pages of his work. Writing and reading stand as mnemotechnical supports, through which Sartre becomes autonomous, hereby curing himself from his difficulties of being[211]. On the other hand, words are provoking pain. As it is revealed in the book, Sartre is terrible speller and struggles to learn the basic rules of grammar. Thus, the same way Foucault thinks care as pedagogical exercise, requiring the individual to comply to a set of rules and constraints, Sartre describes his

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[208] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?* trans. Bernard Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1950) p.23

[209] In 'The Double Writing of "Les Mots": Sartre's "Words" as Performative Philosophy', John F. Whitmire Jr. brings to the reader's attention that the original title was *Jean sans terre,* which translates as *Groundless Jean*. Though bearing many significations, this title was most likely to emphasize Sartre's lack of possessions. In my view the original title can also be heard as "Jean s'enterre"/ *Jean buries himself*, which I think illustrates well the purpose of the text (namely to totalize Sartre's own identity) and corresponds to Sartre's views on the essence of selfhood, which can only be totalized in death. However, I will focus on the final title, which fits better my argument regarding the cultivation of self.

[210] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.153.

[211] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.245

commitment to his existential project as a discipline. The cultivation of self is a positive carving out of the individual, but as carving out, it also implies a form of violence upon the self, which Sartre is very aware of, and which is also a theme one can find in Foucault[212].

Sartre is reluctant to characterize his text as autobiographical and describes it instead as a piece of fiction[213]. And this makes complete sense. *Words* is not an autobiography for it does not (and cannot) totalize Sartre's essence —which is what Sartre intended to do when writing on Flaubert and Saint Genet, arguing that Self only finds its essence in death. In short, it is not an autobiography in the sense that it is not a testimony. Less than a genealogy, *Words* illustrates self as the object of storytelling. Sartre affirms an intimate connection between the subject and the process of writing, which is not specific to *Words*:

> At the age of thirty, I executed the masterstroke of writing in *Nausea* – quite sincerely, believe me – about the bitter unjustified existence of my fellowmen and of exonerating my own. I was Roquentin; I used him to show, without complacency, the texture of my life[214].

Sartre rejects writing as a neutral composite[215] and advocates for the continuity between the author and the text. For him, language plays a significant role in the human condition, as both alienated and alienating. It cannot exist outside its practise or its usage. Thus, Sartre could not agree less with the structuralist attempt which was precisely to remove the speaker from language. *Words* does apply this idea: the same way individuals speak and are spoken to through language, the author writes and is written through a text.

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[212] In an interview with Paul Rabinow, Foucault says that: "It may have been an extremely painful exercise at first and required many cultural valorizations before ending up transformed into a positive activity".
see Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: an Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) p.369
Besides, when describing the multiple self-forming exercises one would need to go through in the third tome of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault does insist on their physically and psychologically demanding character. The violence of the activity of care will be taken up again by Stiegler.

[213] In his interview with Michel Contat he refers to *Word*s as "un roman auquel je crois" (a novel in which I believe) Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre: an interview with Michel Contat*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis, 7 august 1975, also available in *Situations X* (Paris; Gallimard 1976).

[214] Jean Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.251.

[215] Reference to Roland Barthes who claims the opposite in his essay 'The Death of the Author', *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977)

So far, references to technics may not come across as particularly obvious. Nevertheless, technicity remains a significant part of the subtext here. While the written may be assimilated to a mere representation of language, it has in Sartre's work a function that, I think, surpasses representation. Beyond their nominative power, words possess a constitutive power, because they are the necessary tools for the self-forming activity. It is in this sense that the theme of technicity emerges in Sartre's work.

A clear example of this dynamic is when Sartre explains how he took his pen for a sword[216]. This is not only to acknowledge with the salutary value of writing, not only to assert the close and necessary bound between language and the person who makes use of language, but also to render evident its instrumental character[217]; the fact that it is *used*[218]. If words can be transformed into a *sword* — that is, into a weapon which enables the individual to either attack or defend himself — it is because language serves a mode of action; a mode of action which is directed *to a mode of being*. Self-exegesis is crucial for Sartre; it is conceptualized as a form of self-cultivation insofar as it aims to cultivate a sense of self-awareness. But that does not mean he values simply any form of exegesis. In *What Is Literature?* Sartre favours prose language at the expense of poetry. While prose writing is praised for its clarity and efficiency, poetry is accused of being opaque. Unlike Heidegger who defends the philosophical and political virtues of poetry, Sartre argues that the playful character of poetry cannot fully serve the authenticity one should strive to attain. Hence, Sartre views prose writing as superior to poetry, precisely because of its transparency. On this essential feature of literature, Suzanne Guerlac writes:

> To become an appropriate tool for engaged writing, Sartre affirms here, language needs to be cleansed of propagandistic distortions and broadened to meet the needs of the contemporary situation. What is more, however, it is literature that is called upon to perform this task. Literature, then, does not presuppose a transparency of language that it must honor or

[216] Jean Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p253.
[217] This may sound reductive or clumsy, but the theme of technicity in Sartre's work does not go much further beyond the theme of instrumentality.
[218] Sartre's comments on the instrumental character of language echoes Wittgenstein's *Philosophical investigations* when the latter describes words as tools. "Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. — The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects." See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, second edition (Oxford, UK; Basil Blackwell, 1958) p.6

> accommodate. Instead, it is the responsibility of literature to save language from ruin, to "restituer aux mots leurs vertus". Transparency thus becomes a gift of literature, an "art without art" in the Longinian sense, or even an achievement of style— something like Flaubert's *mot juste* or the mythic *écriture blanche*[219].

Suzanne Guerlac explains that, for Sartre, the essence of literature precisely lies in this effort of transparency, in the overcoming of the antinomy between word and action, in order to attain a discursive truth, which is that of the subject and his *vécu*[220]. Indeed, Sartre writes in his essay "For Whom Does One Write?":

> In short, literature is, in essence, the subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution. In such a society it would go beyond the antinomy of word and action. Certainly in no case would it be regarded as an act; it is false to say that the author acts upon his readers; he merely makes an appeal to their freedom, and in order for his works to have any effect, it is necessary for the public to adopt them on their own account by an unconditioned decision. But in a collectivity which constantly corrects, judges, and metamorphoses itself, the written work can be an essential condition of action, that is, the moment of reflective consciousness[221].

In this respect, the committed prose would be the realisation of Sartre's ideal: "to speak is to act[222]". The ideal of transparency, that is, of authenticity, not only implies, but in fact *requires* the instrumentality of language.

To conclude this section: language is problematized in *Words* as a technique of self, for it is thought of as an instrument serving the activity of self-fashioning insofar as language cannot be removed from subjectivity. When Sartre claims he began his life amidst books[223], he is suggesting that in order to be a subject one needs the object. And this is what, I think, *Words* is about; the process of subjectivation through objectification. But this gives rise to a strange paradox: in Sartre's approach, the subject becomes herself by conforming (or committing) to practices. However, in order to *commit* to these practices, I first need to acknowledge myself as a subject of a commitment[224]. It is only insofar as I recognize myself as a subject of commitment,

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[219] Suzanne Guerlac, 'Sartre and the Powers of Literature: The Myth of Prose and the Practice of Reading', *MLN* 108.5 (1993): 805-824.
[220] Christina Howells develops further the theme of the vécu in *Sartre's Theory of Literature* (London; The Modern Humanities Research Association MHRA Texts and Dissertations volume 14, 1979).
[221] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1950) p.159
[222] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1950) p.22

[223] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.40
[224] This will be developed further in the next chapter. Suffice to day at this stage that Phyllis Sutton-Morris has encountered the same paradox. See: Morris, P. S. (1997), 'Self-Creating Selves: Sartre and Foucault', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70, 4 (1997): 537–49.

that is, as already subjected, that I can articulate my project. Hence, Sartre's conception of subjectivity depends on a prior form of subjectivity, which is that of free agency that is enabling me to choose. In this respect, it is my mode of being that affects the mode of my actions. On this issue John F. Whitmire Jr notes:

> No matter how much conditioning is laid upon us, there will remain, deep down, and perhaps largely obscured (but never eradicated), some sense of freedom or agency; and we see precisely that in *Les Mots*: an interiority that remains exceedingly vibrant and alive. It is this of freedom, this auto-affective comprehension of freedom and subjectivity, that pervades *Words*, provides it with its tensions, and keeps it from falling into the somewhat more claustrophobic analysis of the factors conditioning Flaubert in *The Idiot of the Family*.[225]

Foucault apprehends the same issue by stating the opposite: I recognize myself as subject only insofar as I am already acting; it is therefore my actions that affect my mode of being[226]. Hence, the subject is only an effect of practices when Sartre's mode of individuation starts with an auto-affective form of subjectivity. But overall, the fact that Sartre defends the inherence of agency is revealing of his reluctance to conceive subjectivity as passive before social structures. This brings us back to the issue of responsibility, which is the condition and the consequence of freedom.

2.3.2 The necessity of Commitment: Authenticity and Bad Faith

Words is the illustration of Sartre's own project of existence; that of becoming an author. On a larger scale, I argue that the book describes the existential project as the commitment to transcendence. But such a statement brings about some questions: What sort of commitment is Sartre talking about? And to *whom* do I commit? Once I have clarified these issues, the difficulties regarding the central role given to commitment in the activity of self-fashioning will be then addressed.

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[225] John F. Whitmire, "The Double Writing of 'Les Mots': Sartre's 'Words' as Performative Philosophy.", *Sartre Studies International*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2006, pp. 61–82. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23511004. p.72

[226] I will go back to the aporia of self-constitution in the next chapter.

Defined as the "original relation which the for-itself chooses with its facticity and with the world", the project is a transcendent meaning that stems from the reflective exercise in which exploring oneself is already choosing/creating oneself. But for Sartre the project is groundless insofar as the individual can always reinvent herself throughout her life. The roots of the existential project do not derive from a prior reality or a prior logic; the project is instead irrational for it is freely chosen by the subject. The fundamental project lacks foundation and is "that by which all foundations and all reasons come into being[227]". Hence, the choice of self implies a choice of existence, a choice of reasoning; it is profoundly ethical and yet prelogical, as David A. Jopling argues[228]. This is probably the reason why it shares some common features with a sense of religious vocation. Indeed, Sartre renders this analogy explicit in *Words* when describing the strong impression literature had on him: "I had found my religion: nothing seemed to me more important than a book. I regarded the library as a temple[229]".

This religious tone in Sartre's work is odd and suggests that the project of existence shall be understood as a practice of conversion of oneself to oneself. After all, it is suggested throughout the pages of *Being and Nothingness* that one can access an authentic life after going through a radical conversion[230]. But if this is truly the case, the operation of conversion would imply the return to a faithful original being. Foucault picked up this inconsistency[231]. And he suspects that behind the concept of authenticity, Sartre is in fact recognizing the necessity for the individual to be true to herself. While Sartre's use of religious language may be puzzling in some ways, the "corrupted being" he is referring to shall not be understood as the acknowledgement of an inner self. If Foucault is right when pointing out the necessity for Sartre to *commit*, he is mistaken in assimilating this need for commitment with that of the reunification with a true self. Sartre is not concerned about *truth* (which revolves on right and wrong), but about *worth* (which brings about the Kantian notions of respect

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[227] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956), p.479
[228] David A. Jopling, 'Sartre's Moral Psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.117
[229] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.59
[230] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Tokyo, Singapor: Washington Square Press, 1956), p.412
[231] Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics : An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York : Pantheon Books, 1984) p.351

and diginity). Indeed, authenticity only serves the necessity of commitment, which in turns, enables the elaboration of values[232]. Therefore, it is the notion of commitment that remains the key in Sartre's work, more than authenticity itself, which acts more as a justification for commitment.

When *Words* narrates the author's own conversion attempt from bad faith to authenticity, it is still commitment that is valued more than authenticity. Yet, the need for authenticity taints the activity of self-fashioning with frustration. Bad faith characterizes the subject caught in mimesis, while authenticity is the access to a certain form of independence; it is the transcending of role-playing. Hence, the concept of authenticity presents itself as an ethical horizon and requires the subject to fully embrace herself as a responsible agent. In *Words*, the young Sartre is caught in self-deception because he is complying to social rituals, fitting himself to the requirements and expectations of the role he has been assigned by his family, that of impersonating a well-behaved child:

> In a word, I give myself; I give myself always and everywhere; I give everything. I have only to push a door to have—I too—the feeling of appearing on the scene. I place my blocks on top of each other, I turn out my mudpies, I yell. Someone comes and exclaims. I've made one more person happy. Meals, sleep, and precautions against bad weather are the high points and chief obligations of a completely ceremonious life. I eat in public, like a king: if I eat *well,* I am congratulated; my grandmother herself cries out: "What a good boy to be hungry!" [233]

What we then learn from the text is that authenticity starts with lucid consciousness and the will to act upon one's situation. For Sartre, the burden of human existence lies in the irreconcilable conflict between facticity and transcendence. Mostly developed in *Being and Nothingness*, this conflict condemns the individual to an infinite commitment towards himself, but also to infinite self-deception insofar as "we can never radically escape bad faith[234]". On this, *Words* ends with a bitter note, which expresses the impossibility of this ontological reunification and the impossibility for satisfaction as he acknowledges that "my pure choice did not raise me above anyone".[235]

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[232] For Sartre, the essential property of the world is to be absurd, but this absurdity can be surpassed, precisely because humans have the capacity to input values and meanings. On that, he differs from Camus who thought absurdity could not be overcome, but lived with.
[233] Jean Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.32
[234] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992) p.116
[235] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.255

The point I want to focus on here is the following: while Sartre argues that writing, as part of culture, "does not save anything or anyone[236]" and that "it does not justify[237]", he also realizes that writing offers a "critical mirror[238]" through which selfhood gets thicker. However, Sartre still regards writing as "the product of man[239]" in which self would only be projected and not constituted. This lack of consideration for the constitutive role of technics is, for example, evident at the end of the novel when he writes: "Without equipment, without tools, I set all of me to work in order to save all of me[240]". Ironically, this is not what his novel illustrates, simply by virtue of existing as a written text. Hence, my point is not to say that Sartre knowingly conceptualized the aesthecization of the subject through mnemotechnics before Foucault, although I am convinced *Words* shall be read this way. Instead, the point is that the testimony of Sartre's identity formation through technics (essentially writing and reading) is manifest in the text. This amounts to a sort of performative contradiction in Sartre's approach that enables us to more directly link Sartre with Foucault, but also with the theme of technics. Interpreted this way, one should also bear in mind that Sartre's model of creative self-constitution mainly focuses on the outcome of the process: the future version of me I'll never attain. As a result, Sartre's conception of subjectivation is programmed to self-deceit[241], because of the preponderance of the themes of commitment and authenticity, whereas Foucault's work hints at no other horizon than the continual process of transformation itself.

[236] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.254
[237] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.254
[238] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.254
[239] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.254
[240] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.255
[241] Which leads Iris Murdoch to call him a "romantic rationalist" (in her book of the same name)

2.4 SARTRE AND FOUCAULT ON FREEDOM AND POWER

Both Sartre and Foucault come to argue that the individual is caught in a situation and that there is nothing outside the situation. It thus means that the process of self-making is invariably grounded in the material field, circumscribed in a socio-cultural network and dependent of external forces. But they differ in the way they apprehend the formation of human social relationships. The object of this section will be to show how Sartre constrains the individuation process in a *dialectic* of power and freedom. By contrast, Foucault thinks the subjectivation process in terms of *co-dependence* between power and freedom.

In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre distances himself from the Cartesian tradition which makes the ego the sole departure of everything, to conceive instead a model of subjectivity grounded in the practico-inert. In other words, the individual is free and capable to act upon herself insofar as practical activities and material structures always precede and condition her mode of being;

> It would be quite wrong to interpret me as saying that man is free in all situations, as the Stoics claimed. I mean the exact opposite: all men are slaves insofar as their life unfolds in the practico-inert field and insofar as this field is conditioned by scarcity[242].

If the practico-inert, understood as the "activity of others in so far as it is sustained and diverted by inorganic inertia[243]", grounds any form of sociality, such passive activity can be counter-acted, or negated, through free praxis. According to Sartre, praxis characterizes a mode of action as "the negation of matter (in its present organization and on the basis of a future re-organization)[244]", while on the other hand, matter organizes itself as the "negation of action[245]". In short, the subject constitutes herself through a series of negations, the same way freedom is understood as a negating

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[242] Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason; Theory of Practical ensemble, vol 1, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith (London; New Left Books, 1960) p.331

[243] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason; Theory of Practical ensemble, vol 1*, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith (London; New Left Books, 1960) p.556

[244] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason; Theory of Practical ensemble, vol 1*, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith (London; New Left Books, 1960) p.159

[245] Jean-Paul Sartre*, Critique of Dialectical Reason; Theory of Practical ensemble, vol 1*, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith (London; New Left Books, 1960) p.159

principle. Transcending the original facticity one is entangled within means rejecting the inert structures of a situation, refusing to live in scarcity to enter into the realm of existence. By scarcity, Sartre designates a state of survival where human basic needs are met. Existence on other hand refers to a way of living in which the individual is *standing out,* that is, able to project herself. Scarcity is what stamps human relations into the affect, the pathologic and material dependence, while existence is turned toward the cultivation of autonomy. As such, Sartre's conception of freedom shall be understood in terms of a dialectical circularity[246] between *praxis* (as the negation of the inert) and matter (as the negation of *praxis*). As Nik Farrell Fox explains while discussing Sartre's work through a post-modernist lens, the dialectical bond between the inertness of matter and free praxis "reveals a double element at work[247]" which is that of objectification and objectivity. Objectification in the sense that the material object is altered, transformed, in the individual's hands; objectivity because matter absorbs and reconditions human praxis. In this respect, matter and praxis endlessly respond to each other through the principle of interiorization-exteriorization:

> In the univocal milieu of interiority, it *re-exteriorizes* the *praxis* of the conqueror as the interiorizing synthesis of the practical field. And as signification-exigency it reflects *his being* to the producer as *the inert exteriority of a slave* in the milieu of interiority. But, by mortgaging the worker's freedom by its imperative inertia, it transforms, through itself, the free praxis which confronts the worker into a mere inertia of exigency. And, in a way, every freedom, both in the milieu of the Other and in its own milieu of interiority, experiences its own inertial limit, that is to say, its necessity. As soon as multiplicity becomes *indefinite* (in the practical and serial sense), the multiplication of actions and responses is unified in the object which posits itself for itself as a negation of everyone by everyone (and, later, as a common object) … the fleeting unity of the object which affirms itself in opposition to everyone is in reality the negation of everyone, and of everyone for everyone in everyone's practical field, in so far as it becomes a negative, inert unity *in the object*[248].

The same way praxis acts as a force of oppression upon the material field, the inert sediments itself as a negative unity that affirms itself in opposition with human praxis. According to what has been said, Sartre's philosophy is glued in a dialectic of power and freedom, both acting upon the other as a negative force. Hence, the subject is the product of the opposition between activity and passivity, individuated through dynamics of restriction, oppression and exploitation.

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[246] Nik Farrell Fox, *The New Sartre*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2003) p.59
[247] Nik Farrell Fox, *The New Sartre*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2003) p.59
[248] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason; Theory of Practical ensemble*, vol 1, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith (London: New Left Books, 1960) p.323

The late Sartre could be read as close to Foucault in presenting the individual as the product of a material field and power relations. However, as I said, Sartre essentially conceives power as a restrictive force exerted *against* the individual. In contrast, Foucault presents power as a force circulating *among* individuals. Indeed, it appears that regimes of power are crystalized and consolidated through the social bond. The individual is not the victim, or the mere toy of systems of political dominations; he or she cannot be reduced to an inert material on which power is exercised. Instead, the individual is the element of its articulation[249], which means that one is less an object of power, than a complicit subject. Thus, if "power" may resonate as a monolithic concept, it is far from being a repressive system confining individuals into a state of isolation. Foucault argues that power is in fact enabled by circuits of socialization.

> Power must by analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application[250].

Foucault claims that power is not absolute, but dispersed and expressed through social circuits and relations. Though normative, techniques and procedures of power are productive, for they aim at the enhancement of the individual.

For Sartre, freedom and power are necessarily opposed. Power is indeed foreign to the subject, while freedom belongs inherently to the subject insofar as it is because one is free that one is responsible. In this sense, power is for Sartre what challenges the individual's responsibility and limits her own freedom. For Foucault, they act as complementary in the sense where freedom is constructed and conditioned by disciplinary norms. The subject being always subjectified in a situation evolves in a system of power:

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[249] Michel Foucault, 'two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham, Kate Soper (New York, Pantheon Books, 1980) p.99

[250] Michel Foucault, 'two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham, Kate Soper (New York, Pantheon Books, 1980) p.98

> We are not trapped. We cannot jump *outside* the situation, and there is no point where you are free from all power relations. but you can always change it. So what I've said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free—well, anyway, that there is always the possibility of changing ...resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that *resistance* is the main word, *the key word*, in this dynamic[251].

As the capacity to alter the dominant mode of discourse, freedom is not the opposite of power, but its outcome. This means that freedom is in fact already *enabled* and *constrained*[252] in disciplinary techniques. For Sartre, freedom starts with a form of detachment with the practico-inert; it starts with *nothing* rather than *something,* for it is nothingness, after all, that fundamentally characterizes the human being in his view. On the other hand, Foucault's conception of freedom originates in the process of appropriation of the material ensemble, insofar as compliance leads to resistance. Yet, resisting does not mean rebelling against an established order. Whereas Sartre believes that self-making lies in the tension between facticity and transcendence (that is, between constraints of the material field and the surpassing of one's factical condition), Foucault is prudent enough to not let his discourse fall into this kind of dialectic. On the dynamics linking power and freedom, he argues instead that one cannot be thought as a distinct phenomenon or entity, independent from the other:

> We must reposition the power relationships within the struggles and not suppose that power might exist on one side, and that on the other side lies that upon which power would exert itself; nor can we suppose that the struggle develops between power and non-power. Instead of this ontological opposition between power and resistance, I would say that power is nothing other than a certain modification, or the form, differing from time to time, of a series of clashes which constitutes the social body[253].

Continuing on the path of dialectic would, on the reverse, entrap philosophical discourse in the endless and binary logic of the ruler and the ruled, the dominant and the dominated, which is what Foucault wishes to break with. Instead of reinforcing

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[251] Michel Foucault, 'Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity', in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New York Press, 1997), p.167

[252] Aurelia Armstrong, "Beyond Resistance: A response to Žižek's Critique of Foucault's Subject of Freedom", *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy* 2008.5 (2008) : 19-31.

[253] Michel Foucault, 'The question of Power', in *Foucault Live; Interviews 1966-84*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. John Johnston (New York; Semiotext(e), 1989) p.188

oppositions, Foucault aims to think beyond them. Power does not merely designate coercive institutions such as the state, the army or the prison; it rather designates a system of relation that defines, categorizes, compartmentalizes, regulates, administers. As such, power must be apprehended as a discursive regime that produces individuals' modes of freedom.

Hence, if in the Foucauldian perspective, structures of dominations are correlated and co-expansive with one's capacity for freedom, Sartre's analysis of the practico-inert seems, on the contrary, to represent freedom as a mode of action inevitably obstructed by the material field. But if that is the case, it also means that freedom outside power can eventually exist, when Foucault argues for the necessary codependency of the two. The fact that Sartre always opposed freedom to power at least enabled him to not conflate the former with the latter. On the contrary, Foucault's work tends to another reading, which makes freedom an object of power. We will see in the second half of the thesis how Foucault's legacy, on this precise point, turns out to be problematic and how Sartre's belief in an *a priori* freedom may come as useful to fight the generational malaise diagnosed by Stiegler.

2.5 KEY POINTS

In sum, the purpose of this section was to draw continuities between Sartre and Foucault on the theme of self-fashioning. As has been discussed, Foucault goes beyond Sartre's dialectical tension between facticity and transcendence, subject and matter, to describe a process of individuation immanent to forms of social relations. Accused by Sartre of making subjectivity the hostage of impersonal structures or social circuits, Foucault notes, more subtly, that the subject produces power as much as it is produced by it. Another point of divergence covered by this section is that of the activity of self-making: for Sartre the cultivation of self is motivated by an irreducible freedom and is turned towards the maximization of such freedom, when Foucault rather puts the emphasis on the continual practice of power, posited as the horizon of human existence. He thus argues that one is always constrained in a network of power relations. Besides, Sartre's aesthetics of existence appears as quite individualistic and

tends towards self-absorption, despite his efforts to think the subject in a dialectical tension with her social environment. In bringing care into the sphere of power-relation, Foucault's overcomes Sartre's solipstic account of self-therapeutics and throws it into the socio-political realm. However, Foucault was also aware that the principle of care could not be reutilized as such[254]. As we will see in the next chapter, it is Stiegler who manages to resuscitate care in the contemporary political context, but this won't be without a cost.

[254] Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) p.343

III- STIEGLER: TECHNOGENESIS AND THE NECESSITY OF TAKING CARE

This chapter aims to present Bernard's Stiegler's work regarding the technical constitution of self and focuses on how he reutilizes the concept of care in the contemporary context. As such, this section will be divided into two parts: while the first part will be dedicated to the invention of the human (who are we?), the second part will address the question of its preservation (what do we want?)[255]. Through a close reading of the first volume of *Technics and Time* regarding the narrative of the origin, I intend to rearticulate Stiegler's thoughts on the concept of technogenesis, which shall be defined as the co-evolutive process between technics and the human. I will conclude that it is because the formation of the individual intimately depends on the technical, that one needs to take care of oneself. Hence, the second part of the chapter will be devoted to Stiegler's reading of Foucault and his own insight on the status of care as means to combat the current state of disaffection which is marked by irresponsibility.

For Stiegler, technics stands as the horizon of humanity, insofar as it constitutes its very origin. As such, Stiegler argues, technics is at the roots of what it means to be human, so that the questioning of humanity involves the questioning of technicity. The reason for this, as will be demonstrated throughout the first half of the chapter, lies in the co-relation between the human and the technical, so that the history of technics is tied to the history of thought[256]. For Stiegler, there is no world out there except the

[255] Richard Beardsworth, 'Technology and Politics: a Response to Bernard Stiegler', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.211

[256] On this issue, Stiegler argues:

"Humanity's history is that of technics as a process of exteriorization in which technical evolution is dominated by tendencies that societies must perpetually negotiate. The "technical system" is constantly evolving and rendering the "other systems" that structure social cohesion null and void. Becoming technical is originarily a derivation: socio-genesis recapitulates techno-genesis. Technogenesis is structurally prior to socio-genesis—technics is invention, and invention is innovation—and the adjustment between technical evolution and social tradition always encounters moments of resistance,

world humans build for themselves. But positing the human's profoundly technical character shall not be an excuse to simply exploit what technology has to offer; it is in fact the very reason why one must be careful. In this respect, the decadence that Stiegler perceives today[257] becomes a moral issue, for it is now up to the human to affirm her responsibility, to win back autonomy, and to appropriate new technologies. This is what constitutes for him the core of the battle for intelligence. Drawing on the late Foucault, Stiegler therefore affirms care as means of salvation, that is, as a technique to save us from technics.

since technical change, to a greater or lesser extent, disrupts the familiar reference points of which all culture consists. Technics can thus appear to be the opposite of "the spirit of the age," of "civilization," of "the human" itself, though it is humanity's very destiny." (Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time; Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) Introduction, p.2)

[257] What is decadent nowadays for Stiegler is the fact that new technologies have deprived us of our status of user to become instead consumers. This shift has been favored by the rise of capitalism and more precisely, the acceleration of rhythms of production. This discourse resonates for example with Arendt's *Human Condition*.

3. 1 THE INVENTION OF THE HUMAN

3.1.1 Deconstructing the Discourse of the Origin

In an interview, Foucault wonders: "if self-analysis is a cultural invention, why does it seem so natural and pleasurable to us?" Foucault aimed to show how cultures of self, of subjectivity and subjectivation were posed and composed throughout time, yet he could not find an answer to that very question. This is because Foucault, while sympathetic to the tightening of the human and the technical, would not have considered technics as a constitutive part of the human. Yet this would resolve, I believe, Foucault's problem; if technologies of selves seem so natural and pleasurable to us, it may be because technics already lies at the origin of the constitution of self.

It has been explained at length in previous chapters how the self is not a given but an imaginary and social construct. However, for Phyllis Sutton-Morris, this is far from being satisfying. In 'Self-Creating Selves: Sartre and Foucault', she shares her concerns:

> If the claim is made that the self forms or creates itself, what or who is it that does the creating? Wouldn't the self already have to exist to be creative, and if the self pre-exists its own creation, how can the self be a product of that creative activity?[258]

If her worries sound legitimate, perhaps asking "*Who* or *what* does the creating?" is not the right way to approach the issue. Perhaps, the solution to the origin of self does not lie in the origin. This is what I take from my reading of Stiegler who suggests that the question surrounding the origin does not so much revolve around *who* or *what* does the creating, hence implying the prior existence of an outside constitutive of an inside, but on *how* the creating is done. And I argue that for Stiegler, the *how* of the human

[258] Phyllis Sutton Morris, "Self-Creating Selves: Sartre and Foucault", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70, 4 (1997): P.537

lies in its technogenesis. By technogenesis, inspired from Simondon's concept of ontogenesis, Stiegler means that technicity and humanity equally ground each other through the mutual process of becoming. In this respect, technogenesis is what enables Stiegler to give a transcendental account of the emergence of the human through "an empirical account of the emergence of technology[259]". Stiegler thus explains that human beings exteriorize and interiorize themselves in and through technics, thereby continuously transforming and enriching themselves by the means of technical adoption.

Overall, Stiegler's originality regarding the thinking of technology and the thinking of the human is to identify the origin of the human as a lack of origin. Yet, this is not to say that humans have simply no origin. The Stieglerian discourse is not a discourse of negation. It deconstructs the narrative of the origin to better reconstruct it, so that Stiegler thinks the origin of the human as a positive absence. In doing so, he thus turns the weakness pinpointed by Sutton-Morris, namely the aporia of self-creation, into a strength, for the human emerges in the aporetic moment of the origin. For Stiegler, it is through the lack that humans differ and exist.

But to prove his point, Stiegler needs to first deconstruct the metaphysics of presence that has long been glued to the narrative of the origin. This is what he intends to do through his critique of Rousseau's *Discourse On the Origin of Inequalities Among Men* in *Technics and Time*. Secondly, he must rehabilitate the absence as the necessary condition of presence. This is done principally with the help of Derrida's work and the conceptualisation of *différance*, which Stiegler reappropriates in order to posit technics as the condition of human existence. Stiegler then refers to Simondon and presents the human as an invention insofar as it does not find its origin in an identifiable foundational moment, but in the endless coupling of the living and the inert. Besides, the human is an invention because its emergence depends on technics.

[259] Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in *Technics and Time',* in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.53

3.1.2 Stiegler and Rousseau on Deviation

The first volume of *Technics and Time* starts with the following remark: there has been in the history of philosophy a constant opposition between the human and technics. Such an opposition also illustrates the opposition between the human and the animal, nature and culture, as well as the on-going conflict that Derrida notices between speech and writing. This is not without consequences for the status of technology as an object of thought:

> The question of philosophy is *entirely*, and since its origin, that of the endurance of a condition that I call technological: simultaneously technical and logical, initially forged on the axis that forms language and tools, which is to say, on the axis that enables man's *externalisation*. [. . .] Since its origin, philosophy has been marked by this technological condition, *but via its repression* [refoulement] *and denegation*, and the difficult project I have undertaken is to show that *philosophy begins with the repression of its ownmost question*.[260]

The argument is simple; in repressing technics, philosophy repeatedly articulated the question of the origin of the human independently from that of the technical. Thus, Stiegler intends to correct this mistake in advocating for the continuity between the two, so that technics and the human are not opposed, but standing as the condition of each other's emergence.

However, this does not mean that humans and technical objects are born as one and the same. They *differ* from each other and the acknowledgement of their difference is crucial for understanding what Stiegler means by technogenesis. The point is not to reduce technology to the human or vice-versa, but to acknowledge the technical character of the human and its determining role in the evolution of the individual. It is

[260] As quoted by Christina Howells and Gerald Moore, 'Introduction: Philosophy — The Repression of Technics', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.6

to come to terms with the belief that technics "leads us down the road to decay by depriving us of our originary power[261]", precisely because technics constitutes the human's originary power.

> In order to successfully conjugate the human with technics, Stiegler invites us to go back in time, outside time, up to the question of origin.
>
> But the question of the possibility of the human, of its origin, of the possibility of an origin of the human, cannot itself forget the question of the possibility of origin as such. To discourse on the origin of the human is always also, explicitly or not, to discourse on origin in general—on what is, on the principle and the origin of being. The question of origin is that of principles, of the most ancient, of that which, ever since and forever, establishes what is in its being. The question of origin is the question of being[262].

Here, Stiegler has recourse to a philosophical anthropology[263], using the mythical discourse to state what is going to be at the core of his philosophy: the human is a technical invention. Though this approach may be puzzling, it has to be read as the "transcendental deduction of the conditions for the possibility of the human[264]". To pursue this deduction, Stiegler initiates a discussion with Rousseau and his *Discourse On the Origin of Inequalities Among Men*[265]. While Rousseau acknowledges a certain relation between the evolution of the human and that of technics, he does so in such a way that technics only intervenes in the course of history to corrupt the nature of the human, so that technics is an accident, which constitutes the second origin of the human. In distinguishing the essential from the accidental, Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin* reinforces the opposition between nature and culture, for it is arguing for a pre-technological state of the human. Indeed, by the means of this speculative account of the origin of the human, Rousseau confronts us with a primitive state of humanity

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[261] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p115

[262] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p. 95

[263] see Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in *Technics and Time"*, in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013)

[264] Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in '*Technics and Time"*, in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.55

[265] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,* trans. G. D. H. Cole, Rev. J. H. Brumfitt, and J. C. Hall. (London: Everyman's Library, 1973)

where everything is found close at hand and where individuals are self-sufficient. [266] Then comes the fall, which stands as the origin of inequality. The fall is the exteriorization of the human into technics[267] and symbolizes for Rousseau the passage to the realm of mortality. In this respect, the human's nature originates in the loss of her essence, which coincides with the appearance of the tool. This cannot be satisfying for Stiegler. Hence, he is more sympathetic to the work of André Leroi-Gourhan who demonstrates the inherent technicality of vertebrate forms. This includes therefore the humans and animals. Christopher Johnson writes:

> Leroi-Gourhan treats the functional anatomies of animal forms as different *engineering* solutions to the vital requirements of mobility and prehension in different environmental conditions. At each stage of a given evolutionary sequence, a 'balance' or equilibrium is achieved between organs dedicated to locomotion and the forward-facing organs dedicated to orientation and prehension – what Leroi-Gourhan terms the 'anterior field' (*champ antérieur*). Leroi-Gourhan emphasises that the development of nervous systems to 'control' the operations of the anterior field is secondary to the development of the skeleton, the mechanical infrastructure which articulates movement. As Stiegler comments, quoting Leroi-Gourhan, 'mobility, rather than intelligence, is the "significant feature". According to this interpretation, the evolutionary singularity which will distinguish the human from proximate animal forms such as the primates is not the brain but the feet: the emergence of full bipedalism permits a further 'liberation' of the anterior field, freeing the hands for more complex and mediated interaction with the material world[268].

Leroi-Gourhan's account of the human evolutionary process unsurprisingly inspired Stiegler, who, in turn, claims that the human emerges through the structural coupling between the human and technics. Leroi-Gourhan's instrumental maieutics teaches us that the hominization process is articulated around the double interaction between the cortex and the tool. However, Stiegler becomes soon critical of Leroi-Gourhan, for the latter reintroduces a second origin in his account of human evolution, hence repeating Rousseau's mistake. Put otherwise, Leroi-Gourhan's work suggests a shift in the process of humanisation in which the appearance of the homo sapiens constitutes a clear rupture with the earlier stages of the human, such as the *Zijanthropus* and the Neanderthal. For Stiegler, this position is not tenable with Leroi-Gourhan's earlier

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[266] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.116

[267] Stiegler quoting Rousseau, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.116

[268] Christopher Johnson, 'The Prehistory of Technology: On the Contribution of Leroi-Gourhan', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.37

demonstrations as it is to go back to a certain form of essentialism[269] in which one would acknowledge that the homo sapiens is qualitatively and intrinsically different from the Zijanthropus and the Neanderthal; it is to assume that the homo sapiens "shows signs of another type of intelligence, a spiritual and creative intelligence" which is "not immediately dependent on the technical intelligence of its origins"[270].

This is where Rousseau's notion of deviation[271] becomes particularly interesting, for it enables us to grasp human evolution as deferral and not as a series of shifts and ruptures. The problem is that Rousseau's account of the deviation lacks consistency[272]. Rousseau's anthropology starts with the acknowledgement of a state of perfection. Insofar as we understand perfection as fullness, a difficulty arises. This difficulty, Stiegler argues, is that of the impossibility of movement which is the impossibility of deviation itself. Indeed, one is either perfect and has no reason to deviate, or one has never been perfect and has been deviating all along,[273]. Hence, Stiegler's solution is to argue instead for the continuous deferral of the human in technics, so that when Rousseau understands the origin as a primary fullness of being, Stiegler turns that same origin into a principle of distancing.

In choosing to retain from Rousseau's transcendental anthropology the concept of deviation, Stiegler aims to deconstruct the discourse of the origin by suggesting the human's lack of origin and assuming deviation as an always already existing dynamic. In doing so, Stiegler not only comes to terms with the metaphysics of presence that involves the understanding of the origin as full presence from which humans have been degenerating, he also frees technics from the discourse of corruption it has long been associated with, so that when Rousseau could only see in deviation a form of regress, Stiegler is able for his part to apprehend it as the possibility for progress. Moving away

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[269] Christopher Johnson, 'The Prehistory of Technology: On the Contribution of Leroi-Gourhan', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.50

[270] Christopher Johnson, 'The Prehistory of Technology: On the Contribution of Leroi-Gourhan', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.39

[271] *Écart* in French. It translates as deviation, gap or interval, but it can also imply a certain form of misconduct, a lack, a failure and a default.

[272] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.101

[273] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.119

from Rousseau to better reutilize the work of Leroi-Gourhan and, more significantly, of his mentor Derrida, Stiegler will identify the originary deviation as a technological differentiation.

3.1.3 Stiegler and Derrida: Différance and the Metaphysics of Absence

Technics and Time takes Derrida's *Of Grammatology* for direct inspiration. Like Derrida, Stiegler proposes a reading of Leroi-Gourhan's *Gesture and Speech* and reuses Rousseau's work on the natural deviation within nature. While Derrida intended to stress the repressing of writing in the history of thought, Stiegler aims to show, for his part, the repressing of technics[274].

Différance, argues Stiegler, stands as the quasi-transcendental condition for the human to emerge as technical being. Drawing on Derrida's *Grammatology*, Stiegler thus defines différance as the reciprocal coupling of spatial differing and temporal deferring[275]. For both thinkers, différance is an arche-writing. This means that différance is an inscriptive process enabling all inscriptive processes. But while Derrida leaves différance into the domain of abstraction, hereby suggesting that différance always escapes meaningful (re)presentation, Stiegler locates the principle of différance in technics, hence deploying a programmatology. [276] Unlike Derrida, it is not différance that enables technics to emerge, but technics that generates

[274] Christopher Johnson, 'The Prehistory of Technology: On the Contribution of Leroi-Gourhan', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.34

[275] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.139

[276] Stiegler argues on this issue: "The history of the *gramme* is that of electronic files and reading machines as well—a history of technics—which is the invention of the human. As object as well as subject. The technical inventing the human, the human inventing the technical. Technics as inventive as well as invented. This hypothesis destroys the traditional thought of technics, from Plato to Heidegger and beyond" see: *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.137

différance[277]. Understood so, if we have to speak of the origin of the human, that origin is double; empirical and transcendental. Stephen Barker writes on this issue:

> For Derrida, originary *différance* is a principle entirely independent of the experiential; for Stiegler, grammatisation only occurs through technical objects, as mnemotechnics: the experiential is a consequence of technics *and* of its concretisation in technical objects. Stiegler refers to this as the 'originary prostheticity' of the experiential (as consciousness). Because for Derrida all semiological systems are distinct from 'arche-writing', difference precedes the technical. Stiegler radicalises this notion by insisting on the *a priori* technicity of 'organised inorganic matter': technics, in the form(s) of technical objects, provides the conditions for all inscription (…) As is made clear in *Ecologies of Television,* this equivalency means that Stiegler is in fundamental disagreement with Derrida regarding the relationship of technics and the artifactuality of technical objects within time. While for Derrida *différance* maintains an integrity that is affected by technics only in the sense that the technical is a form of the reification of *différance*, for Stiegler technics is the support for any organic subjectivity, the 'technical synthesis' providing the irreducible empirical base for human agency[278].

Though one could interpret the Stieglerian move as a betrayal of Derrida's intention to keep différance in the elusiveness and openness of its ongoing movement, Stiegler does not merely materialize différance in technical objects. His point is more subtle as he presents technics itself as a différantial process[279].

On a phenomenological perspective, technics therefore appears as the starting point of everything, even of time and space. After all, the first volume of *Technics and Time* intends to demonstrate how the temporality of Dasein already depends on the acknowledgment of its fundamental technicity. This is why, according to Stiegler, the genius of Heidegger was to have presented *Dasein*[280] in *Being and Time* as the user of

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[277] For Stiegler *différance* belongs to the genetic, unlike Derrida who understands it mainly as a logical principle. See: Miguel de Beistegui, 'Science and Ontology: From Merleau-Ponty's reduction to Simondon's Transduction', in *Gilbert Simondon: Being and Technology*, edited by Arne de Boever, Alex Murray, Jon Roffe and Ashley Woodward (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012) p.168

[278] Stephen Barker, 'Techno-pharmaco-genealogy', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.267-8

[279] This point is crucial to understand Stiegler's views on technics as he does not refer to machines or objects, but to an abstract orgasitional force, which is that of instrumentality.

[280] Stiegler's definition of Dasein: "Dasein, the 'entity which we are ourselves', is the guarantor of being in its temporality, a temporality that is also its truth as the history of be- ing. It is characterized by four traits: temporality, historiality, self-understanding, and facticity." see: *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.5 On the temporality of Dasein, Stiegler states later on: "Dasein is the being who differs and defers *[l'étant qui diffère]*. A being who differs and defers should be understood in a twofold sense: the one who always puts off until later, who is essentially pro-jected in deferral, and the one who, for the same reason, finds itself originarily different, in- determinate, improbable. The being who defers by putting off till later anticipates: to anticipate always means to defer. Dasein has to be: it is not simply—it *is only* what *it will be;* it *is* time" cf: *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard

equipment[281].

In conjugating *différance* with the inscriptive process of technics, it is not that Stiegler accidentally restores a metaphysics of presence in empiricizing what should have stayed in the domain of the transcendental or quasi-transcendental. He in fact suggests the reverse; technical differentiation supposes a metaphysics of absence[282]. In this respect, the genesis of the human is not *purely* technical. To better express his point, Stiegler once again has recourse to mythical discourse and uses the story of twin brothers Epimetheus and Prometheus as told in Plato's *Protagoras*. The story is simple; when Epimetheus forgets to provide humans with qualities necessary for their survival, Prometheus intends to correct his brother's mistake by endowing humanity with the gift of *tekhne*. Here is when things get complicated; Prometheus stole fire (as the representation of the first *tekhne*) from the gods. The gift is the result of a theft, so that Prometheus only repeats his brother's gesture, himself committing a fault to make up for Epimetheus' fault. If Stiegler chooses to have recourse to mythical narrative, it is not for the mere purpose of entertainment or to simply follow Rousseau's path in sketching his own transcendental anthropology, but because the lack can only *be* mythical[283]. The lack is in fact the *quasi-cause* of the human. This means that humans are not defined by what they have, but by what they don't have. The lack is therefore the first quality of the human; a quality that is a non-quality. Stiegler reutilizes here a Deleuzian concept which derives itself from the Stoic heritage. A quasi-cause in, in

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Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.231

[281] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.219

[282] See Daniel Ross, 'Pharmacology and Critique After Deconstruction', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013)

[283] Michael Lewis develops on this issue and notes: "Stiegler explicitly avows that the co-invention of human and tool produces 'the illusion of succession'. Rousseau's enduring merit, for Stiegler, is to have noticed the necessity of this fiction. It is impossible to decide which comes first, subjectivity's need of being supplemented by empirical technics, or the tool's assumption of a transcendental function: it is an 'aporia', a moment of undecidability in which neither of two opposed routes is navigable: 'the aporia always ends up hardening into a mythology that opposes two moments [. . .] This is an excellent archetype of the discourse of philosophy on technics, relating through a fiction, if not by a myth, how the man of pure nature is replaced by the man of the fall, of technics"
see: Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in '*Technics and Time'',* in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.65

this respect, what "produces the effect of sense out of non-sense[284]". The myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus mentioned above exemplifies perfectly the concept of quasi-cause, insofar as the ontological deficiency of the human produces indeed an effect on what it means to be human. This effect or accident is that of technics itself, which emerges from an absence of pure cause.

Stiegler wants the reader to retain two things from the myth: 1) the essence of the human lies in its prosthetic character, which also marks its difference 2) Technics do not compensate for something that has been lost, it makes up for something that was never there.

3.1.4 Stiegler and Simondon on Transduction

Stiegler argues that it is a mistake to simply reduce the question of technics to "the specified domain of tools, of instruments, if not [simply] machines"[285]. Instead, he stresses that all human actions are the result of a technical conditioning, that is, a process of fashioning. Technics in the sense of *tekhne* designates in this respect broad skills such as politeness, elegance, rhetoric or poetry[286]. Technique refers on the other hand to specialized skills, so that one would speak of the technique of craftsman, the doctor or the architect. Despite these distinctions, Stiegler claims that one cannot delimit the sphere of technics insofar as technics traverses life in general[287].

Refusing the instrumentization of technics, that is, its reduction to the domain of instruments, does not involve the complete and simple negation of its instrumental character, though. Leaving aside the old-fashioned conception of technicality as a

[284] Daniel Smith and John Protevi, 'Gilles Deleuze', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/deleuze/>.

[285] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.93

[286] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.93-94

[287] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.93-94

means serving ends, his work intends to frame the technical as a vectorial/regulative process[288], which concerns the living as a whole and not just the inert. In line with what has been said before regarding the impossibility to think the origin, unless it is posited as a non-origin, it will be stated that for Stiegler, the technical and the human co-constitute each other.

Simondon appears as an excellent starting point for Stiegler, for he claims that "form does not precede matter[289]". As a consequence, one does not start with the question of being, but with the process of becoming itself, which Simondon calls individuation. As Anne Sauvagnargues notes:

> By presupposing the hierarchical subordination of matter to a transcendent form, the constituted individual is considered to be explicable on the basis of a principle of individuation anterior to it. However, the presupposition of a preformed principle of individuation that transcends the operation of individuation renders the becoming of the individual as a real process impossible to explain. Simondon therefore challenges the notion that the process of individuation can be considered in a unitary manner, and refuses to presuppose that the principle of this individuation can be conceived as a formal cause exterior to the real process. Purely nominal, abstract and explicative, the principle of individuation must become the genetic principle contemporary with real individuation[290].

Starting from the Simondonian becoming of being, which Stiegler takes as the mutual coming-together of the human and the technical, the next step will be now to describe in more details the nature of this relational process.

The ongoing movement of the mutual process of becoming between an individual and its milieu is what Simondon calls the process of transduction[291]. Transduction stands at the core of the ontogenetic. Stiegler claims for his part that it is also transduction that ties the human and the technical together. By transduction, Simondon originally meant the process in which two opposite terms are traversed and transformed by an energy homogenizing what used to be heterogeneous. Read from

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[288] This issue will be covered in more details in the fifth chapter.

[289] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.59

[290] Anne Sauvagnargues,' Crystal and Membranes: Individuation and Temporality', in *Gilbert Simondon: Being and Technology*, eds. Arne de Boever, Alex Murray, Jon Roffe and Ashley Woodward (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2012) p.57

[291] Christina Howells and Gerald Moore, 'Introduction: Philosophy — The Repression of Technics', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.5

this angle, transduction owes its productivity to both destruction and construction, entropy and negentropy; it is a process of change that feeds on the constant renewal and partial resolution of tensions. Stiegler, on the other hand, leaves aside the entropic character of the transductive to focus on its negentropic force through the means of *tekhne*[292], for what interests Stiegler is the resolution of conflicts, not the conflicts themselves[293].

The same way Stiegler technicized the Derridean legacy on *différance*, Stiegler comes to technicize the Simondonian understanding of the transductive in presenting the latter as the technical itself. As a result, one could say that transduction is the technical becoming of the individuation of being[294]. In this respect, we passed from a Simondonian *ontogenesis* to a Stieglerian *technogenesis*.

3.1.5 Instrumental Maieutics and the Technicality of Consciousness

Not only does the transductive transform, it trans-subjectifies. This is why Stiegler incorporates the circular relationship of the who and the what in his reading, which he encountered with Leroi-Gourhan. Thus, he wonders:

> The relation binding the "who" and the "what" is invention. Apparently, the "who" and the "what" are named respectively: the human, and the technical. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of the genitive imposes at least the following question: what if the "who" were the technical? and the "what" the human? Or yet again must one not proceed down a path beyond or below every difference between a *who* and a *what?*[295]

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[292] The individuating power of the transductive is characterized by Stiegler as "the negentropizing of the entropic becoming" in *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.187

[293] See Bernard Stiegler, 'The Theater of Individuation: phase-shift and resolution in Simondon and Heidegger', in *Gilbert Simondon: Being and Technology*, eds. Arne de Boever, Alex Murray, Jon Roffe and Ashley Woodward (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2012)

[294] Anne Sauvagnargues, 'Crystal and Membranes: Individuation and Temporality', in *Gilbert Simondon: Being and Technology*, eds. Arne de Boever, Alex Murray, Jon Roffe and Ashley Woodward (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2012) p.57

[295] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.135

The who refers to the development of the mind and the what to the growth of the technical milieu. Stiegler's work suggest that both terms are driven by certain tendencies, which is that of the techno-logical. What Stiegler coins as tendency is what Leroi-Gourhan has identified as the field of determinism that "dictates that humans will engage with their external environment (*milieu*) in predictable and convergent ways"[296]. In fact, the structural coupling of the mind and the technical milieu, which is in other words the instrumental maieutic between the who and the what[297], enables Stiegler to give an empirical account of the emergence of consciousness.

If one remembers well, Sartre describes consciousness as uncaused. It belongs therefore to the transcendental. Yet, Stiegler seems by the means of Leroi-Gourhan's instrumental maieutics and Simondon's work on transduction to technicize consciousness itself[298]. On a broader scale, the originality of Stiegler's work is to indeed suggest that humans are not capable of achieving transcendental subjectivity[299],

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[296] Christopher Johnson, 'The Prehistory of Technology: On the Contribution of Leroi-Gourhan', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.35

[297] Full quote: "Cortex and tools are differentiated together, in one and the same movement. It is a question of a singular process of structural coupling in "exteriorization," an instrumental maieutics, a "mirror proto-stage" in which the differentiation of the cortex is determined by the tool as much as that of the tool by the cortex, a mirror effect in which one, informing itself of the other, is both seen and deformed in the process, and is thus transformed. It is straightaway this couple that forms the original dynamic in a transductive relation"
see *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.176

[298] On theorizing consciousness, Stiegler mostly draws from the work of Husserl. Briefly put, Husserl argues that consciousness is always the consciousness of something, hereby suggesting from his reading of Brentano, that the nature of consciousness lies in its intentionality. It means that consciousness is always directed towards objects, which Husserl, extending on Brentano's work, takes as the condition for consciousness to emerge at a first place, so that the object constitutes consciousness (and is constituted by consciousness in return). As we have seen earlier, Sartre's works on self and consciousness are also inspired by Husserl. Hence, Stiegler and Sartre are closer that we may imagine on the theme of individuation, even if Sartre did not put the emphasis on technics. In the case of Sartre and the early Husserl, consciousness is transcendental. But for Stiegler, it is already technically conditioned.
Stiegler argues that the flux consciousness is cinematographic, for example: "Consciousness does work like a movie projector; not only a projector but also a machine for capturing, recording, splicing, editing, post-production, mixing and special effects. The movies are an exteriorization of the structure of consciousness. Consciousness is a cutting room, a central control room, because it edits the flow of primary, secondary and tertiary retentions".
Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, edited and translated by Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.100

[299] Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in '*Technics and Time'',* in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.63

that is, of spontaneously positing themselves as being the founders of their own experience. Instead, humans need technics and are always preceded by technics:

> In this way the technical object allows the human being to relate to time while simultaneously anchoring this relation within a history. This goes some way towards explaining why Stiegler describes his work as an *archaeology* of reflexivity[300].

As such, technics is what enables consciousness to be formed. To be more precise, it is the condition of possibility for the spontaneity of the reflective activity[301]. While Sartre's and Stiegler's accounts both located freedom within consciousness, the former considered psychological freedom to be absolute and irreducible to the human insofar as one is always choosing and that a choice is conscious. Stiegler, on the other hand, argues that consciousness remains vulnerable to the technical milieu, insofar as it is the product of this milieu. This means that my very freedom to think can be jeopardized. In this respect, one must take care of oneself. The questions will be to find how Stiegler proposes to revive care.

3. 2 THE PRESERVATION OF THE HUMAN:

3.2.1 A Politics of Care

The following sections will investigate how Foucault's and Stiegler's reading of care first overlap and how they diverge insofar as Stiegler politicized what Foucault mostly approached from the angle of aesthetics[302].

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[300] Michael Lewis, 'Of a Mythical Philosophical Anthropology: The Transcendental and the Empirical in '*Technics and Time'',* in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press,2013) p.54

[301] Richard Beardsworth, 'Technology and Politics: A Response to Bernard Stiegler', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.210

[302] Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) p.350

In his article on 'Stiegler and Politics', Richard Beardsworth writes that "Stiegler's philosophy of technology has argued for reason and for institution at a moment in critical theory and postmodern debate when there remains a strong and debilitating suspicion of the dominating tendencies of post-Enlightenment reason and its institutions". Stiegler's work on *Taking Care of Youth and The Generations*[303], which I propose to turn to for this section, illustrates Beardsworth's statement well, for in pinpointing the generational malaise individuals are confronted with, Stiegler does indeed favour a return to institutions as guarantors of a healthy political future. This optimism towards institutions is motivated by his reading of Foucault who demonstrated that through ostensibly repressive structures, institutions enable the production of the individual, and that the repressive is not necessarily what negates, but the condition for constructing and ordering social relations. However, Foucault was not a defender of institutions. Though he acknowledged their productive force, he did not see systems of disciplinary powers has a viable system of care [304]. For Stiegler, we are currently plunged into a state of intellectual regression, that is, of social immaturity. To combat this immaturity, we must discipline ourselves. Though his conservative tone may be questionable and could be the object of strong criticism, to be fully understood it needs to be read in conjunction to his account of psychopower.

New technologies, Stiegler argues, have perverted the process of self-formation (or individuation, as Stiegler prefers to call it) in short-circuiting the stream of consciousness. In other words, our techno-cultural environment is encouraging practices of desubjectivation insofar as it stimulates "regressive identification processes" and leads to "crowd psychology"[305].While acknowledging the power of Foucault's work, Stiegler believes that Foucault underestimated the psychological impact of technologies on individuals, for his theory of biopower mostly discusses the issue from a somatic perspective. In this respect, not only is biopower insufficient to describe the disastrous effects of new technologies on the psychic constitution of the individual, but it needs to be refined by the notion of psychopower insofar as it is not the body that constitutes the main political target anymore, but the very structure of

[303] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010)
[304] Oliver Davis, 'Desublimation for Education in Democracy', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.173
[305] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.62

consciousness. As we have seen earlier, especially with Sartre, consciousness is essential to the process of self-formation. It is the condition of possibility of subjectivation, but as transcendental as it is, Stiegler tells us that it depends on the empirical ground of technics. Hence, the challenge is to reinstall practices of subjectivation at the core of political concern. While for Stiegler this implies an odd return to the institutions of the French Third Republic, it finally suggests that in order to combat the negative effects of new technologies, one needs to have recourse to their older counterparts. Adopting healthier technologies is indeed the only way to adopt a healthier relationship with oneself.

3.1.2 Carelessness, Consumerism and the Generational Malaise

Psychopower, Stiegler tells us, refers to strategies of power that penetrate the unconscious in order to subvert the aesthetic pleasure of desire in favor of the instant demands of drives. One of the main consequences is that it tends to reduce the individual to the function of consumer. In short-circuiting desire, essential to the process of individuation, the consumerist values spread by the entertainment industries trap individuals in a meaningless existence.

This meaningless existence is that of disenchantment, Stiegler argues, and is fuelled by self-disinterest and carelessness. In other words, it seems that, for Stiegler, we attain another stage in the formation of the individual, which is that of dis-identification; a dis-identification provoked by practices of de-subjectivation. The challenge is to turn these practices of de-subjectivation into practices of subjectivation — to transform carelessness into carefulness. Identifying care as the cornerstone of his politics of the self, Stiegler also quickly associates care with the notion of respect:

> What do these children deserve; what do "our" children deserve; what do children deserve, who(so)ever they are? Do they not deserve, at least, to have fathers, grandfathers, and a family (which is fundamentally always adoptive) within which they can *play,* and through doing so learn to respect, that is, to love, and not merely to fear? What does it mean to play with one's

> daughter or grandson? It means to laugh and to "forget about time" with them-to give them one's time, and to give it not merely to their brains but to the formation of their nascent attention by concentrating one's adult attention on their juvenility-as imagination[306].

The claim that needs to be retained is the following: we have lost respect for ourselves and others. Unlike Kant, dignity and self-respect are not innate attributes of the human. Instead, they are skills to be acquired and practiced. Put otherwise, it is through the heteronomy of the exercise of care that one gains autonomy. Taking care of oneself is for Stiegler, what we owe to each other; it is the condition for the reinvention of the human and a political imperative.

Stiegler's writing can sometimes be dramatic but this shall not overshadow his statement, which is that new technologies affect the individual's cognitive faculties. The statement does not come across as particularly original, as this issue has been investigated by Katherine Hayles. However, the Foucauldian reading that Stiegler injects to it may be worth of attention, for Stiegler is giving another dimension to Foucault's still very influential model of biopower and makes the relationship between the techno-cultural and the development of mental life a political issue. By new technologies, Stiegler understands technologies that are designed for the era of the digital. In being the agents of economic powers and in supporting industries of entertainment, digital technologies dis-educate people because they reduce the aesthetic experience of knowledge to a mere object of consumption. The triumph of capitalist values and the obsession for profit symbolize the decline of the human. Indeed, individuals are not able to think of themselves other than through their possessions; through what they *have* instead of who they *are*.

> In such circumstances, children are encouraged to construct themselves as referential individuations (but having neither authority *nor* intelligence), resulting in identification not with parents, nation, or any idealized object but with merchandise and brand names. [307]

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[306] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.14

[307] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.62

In this case, identity is another object of hyper-consumerism; it has been turned into branding. In order to fight the branding of the individual, Stiegler suggests that we must reinvent the social, as it is the condition for the reinvention of the human. Carelessness is a state of immaturity in which individuals refuse or do not simply know how to be responsible. The task will be therefore to instil maturity and responsibility again. This can only be done through the means of education. For Stiegler, education is the cornerstone of a healthy social structure, as it guarantees the transition from childhood to adulthood. Thus, he suggests that in struggling to educate its own children, contemporary societies are in fact struggling to transmit responsibility, and this causes a generational rupture. It is through the intergenerational relationship, the connection between youth and the eldest, that culture can indeed be preserved and expanded.

> These *living* ancestors then serve as transmitters of experience accumulated across many generations, connecting the child with *dead* ancestors; this transmission process is the very formulation and formalizing of the reality principle in its many forms of knowledge (knowing how to live, knowing what to do, knowing how to think *[savoir-vivre, savoir-faire, savoir-theorique]*. Such transmissions are precisely the pleasure principle's objects and media—the objects and media of sublimation[308].

Hence, it has become urgent to reconsider the relation between generations, but also the relation towards technologies insofar as they enable the social bond and stand as the necessary support for knowledge transmission. Overall, the problem identified by Stiegler deals with the question of cultural heritage, that is, the transgenerational, as the condition for inventing new futures. But *inventing* is not *nihilating*. For Stiegler, the question of the preservation of the human comes as crucial. In fact, it is through its preservation that the human can be reinvented.

For all these reasons, Stiegler thinks it crucial to turn to Foucault.

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[308] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.7

3.2.3 From Biopower to Psychopower

> A reading of Foucault is especially necessary and promising: Foucault also showed that the techniques of the self, as techniques of psychical organization, are always already techniques of collective organization – which he demonstrates in his analysis of the correspondence of Seneca with Lucilius. On the other hand, Foucault did not see coming the question of psychopower, whereby marketing, from the emergence of the programme industries, transforms the psychotechniques of the self and of psychic individuation into industrial psychotechnologies of transindividuation, that is, into psychotechnologies threaded by networks, and as the organization of an industrial reticulation of transindividuation that short-circuits traditional and institutional social networks[309].

Stiegler salutes Foucault for having shown that technologies are indeed constitutive of the psycho-social formation of the individual. However, he also reproaches Foucault for having underestimated the growth of programming industries as new regimes of domination. According to Stiegler, new technologies differs from traditional craftsmanship, for they disrupt the process of appropriation, that is, the internalisation of automatisms, which is essential for individuation. Deprived of his or her role as artisan, the individual is proleterianized, Stiegler says, precisely because of the annihilation of the intimate relationship binding the worker and the product together. Proleterianization isn't just for Stiegler the transformation of workforce into resources of exploitation, as Marx described it, but the loss of one's abilities and, widely speaking, the pauperization of minds due to the massive exteriorization of knowledge into technologies. Whereas Marx deplored that alienation and the acceleration of production left labor masses unable to consume what they produce, Stiegler asserts that masses of today — or audiences— are confronted with the reverse; we are unable to *make* what we consume. This loss of productivity is symptomatic of disindividuation, which characterizes the process of disappropriation of knowledge, and ultimately encourages the formation of an immature social body ready to serve consumerism. As such, the subject as consumer is "exactly what Foucault's theory of biopower does not allow to be thought[310]".

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[309] Bernard Stiegler, 'Within the limits of capitalism, economizing means Taking Care', in *Telemorphosis: Theory in in the Era of Climate Change (vol.1)*, ed. Tom Cohen (Michigan: Open University Press, 2012) p.107

[310] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.127

Behind the phenomenon of consumerism initiated by the "American way of life",[311] Foucault struggles to fully conceive of the psychological impact of technologies on individuals, for his theory of biopower revolves on the body. Yet, the excess of production coupled with the digitization of our environment, which is the end of spaces of enclosures, leaves us with no choice other than substituting the Foucauldian concept of docile bodies for that of docile consciousnesses. Instead of policing the individual's gestures, psychopower penetrates the unconscious to subvert desire for drives:

> This destruction of desire (which is also to say, of attention and care), which leads to a drive-based economy, that is, an essentially destructive economy, is a new limit encountered by capitalism, this time not only as mode of production but also as mode of consumption defined as way of life, that is, as biopower become psychopower[312].

Consumption sustains an economy of *jouissance* and waste. Stiegler retraces the etymology of consumption: derived from the Latin *consummare*, which first meant fulfillment before being understood as a synonym for loss (*perdere*) or destruction (*destruere*), consumption refers to a drive-based energy, that is, an urge to satisfy the customer's needs. So understood, consumption is the opposite of care, for consumption is based on the systematic destruction of its object. In this sense, consumption sustains an economy of abandonment. Objects are turned into expedients, which means they are de-symbolized. As such, they respond to addicted consumers instead of relating to desiring subjects. According to Stiegler, it is precisely the liquidation of desire that affects the feeling of existing[313]. The liquidation of desire plunges the individual in a state of hopelessness, so that what dominates instead is the feeling of futility and disgust. The hollowness of the economy of *jouissance* promoted by industrialization and capitalism is entropic because it exacerbates symbolic misery. In short-circuiting desire, essential to the process of individuation, consumerism traps

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[311] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.17

[312] Bernard Stiegler, 'Within the limits of capitalism, economizing means Taking Care', in *Telemorphosis: Theory in in the Era of Climate Change (vol.1)* ed. Tom Cohen (Michigan: Open University Press, 2012) p.110

[313] Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: on pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press 2013) p.51

humans into meaningless survival. Incapable of projecting themselves and of forming any aesthetic attachment to their environment, individuals subsist instead of existing. This progressive bestialization of the human is what Foucault has not considered while elaborating on biopower. More precisely, Foucault has not seen that, as a weapon of psychopower, consumerism destroys minds to penetrate the *id* and unleash morbid impulses.

According to Stiegler, new technologies — as the agents of psychopower— disrupt concentration in introducing a state of hyper-vigilance and hyper-connectivity. This is principally caused by the dilution of the 'spaces of enclosure' Deleuze discuses in *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, in which the line between public and private, the outside and the inside, are blurred, thereby plunging the individual into the continuous and distracting stream of information. "The informational saturation", Stiegler argues, "dissocializes the consumer of that information. Knowledge and understanding must be psychically assimilated and made one's own, whereas information is merchandise made to be consumed. Information, unlike knowledge in general, is therefore 'disposable[314]'". In other words, the continuous stream of information does not enable us to appropriate adequately that information and to transform it into an object of knowledge as the information is made to be absorbed, not to be reflected upon, critiqued or challenged. Information, like any other commodity, follows the logic of the market; it is endlessly produced and destroyed. And like any other commodity, it is aimed to engender short-term profit

The proleterianization[315] of minds occurs through this phenomenon of merchandization — and therefore destruction— of knowledge. In the age of information, the individual struggles to form any aesthetic attachment to singular objects. The impoverishment of the aesthetic experience, provoked by global

[314] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.184

[315] On the meaning of proleterianization, Stephen Barker's own footnote may be useful, as he comments: "Proletarian" for Stiegler does not mean "worker" nor "exploited worker" in the traditional Marxian sense, but rather the cog in the social wheel that has been deprived of all skills, let alone expertise, thus of knowledge, and *thus* of any participation in the critical process of collective intelligence (and thus of identity). The Stieglerian prole has no *savoir-faire* and thus no *savoir- vivre.* (see Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.213)

marketization, is what Stiegler diagnoses as 'symbolic misery'. Drawing on the work of N. Katharine Hayles, Stiegler then distinguishes deep attention and hyper attention. Deep attention characterizes autonomous consciousness insofar as this form of attention transcends the set of automatisms consciousness has internalized, to critically engage with the object of attention. Conversely, hyper attention defines consciousness trapped into automatization[316].

Psychopower, Stiegler claims, provokes a state of hyper-vigilance and hyper-connectivity in short-circuiting the stream of consciousness, which is the stream of attention formation, to solicit instead cerebral reflexes. Indeed, hyper-attention is precisely what is "dispersed, disseminated" and "undisciplined"[317] so that it contributes to the impoverishment of processes of cognition. It in fact indicates a break in the process of the simondonian (trans)individuation, that is, the psychic and collective formation of signification. In this respect, hyper-attention is a mode of concentration characterized by its brevity. It is a stimulating process through which the nervous system is constantly switching "from one data stream to another[318]".

With the growth of internet, which is also the growth of industries of data, the mental faculty of relating oneself towards an object has become increasingly difficult. Stiegler blames again consumerism as it is consumerism that blocks the possibility for culture. To restore a sense of culture would consequently involve fighting hyper attention and cultivate instead deep attention.

> Attention is also the name of civility as it is founded on *philia*, that is, on socialised libidinal energy. This is why the destruction of attention is both the destruction of the psychical apparatus and the destruction of the social apparatus (formed by collective individuation) to the extent that the later constitutes of system of care, given that to pay attention is also to take care. (It is also to *watch out*, which is taken up in the emphasis I will put on destruction.) Such a system of care is also a libidinal economy, wherein a psychical apparatus and a social apparatus hook up, whose destruction today is engendered by technological apparatuses.[319]

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[316] For Stiegler, automatization is the acquisition of reflexes as opposed to the integration of skills of automaticity. As one can see, the line between automaticity and automatization is very thin, which is another reason why the individual must *learn* to make a good use of technics.

[317] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.77

[318] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.79

[319] Bernard Stiegler, 'Within the limits of capitalism, economizing means Taking Care', in *Telemorphosis: Theory in in the Era of Climate Change (vol.1)* ed.Tom Cohen (Michigan: Open University Press, 2012) p.104-5

Indeed, deep attention is a mode of attention that is called mature because it is socialised in educative procedures. Attention as *philia* grounds the collective — the transindividual milieu — and guarantees the transmission of knowledge. The whole purpose of education would be then to cultivate deep-attention.

In short, we have passed from the negentropic phase of biopower to the naturalization of entropy, for it is entropy that psychopower feeds on. Drawing on the theorist Joseph Schumpeter who thought the capitalism of the mid-twentieth century in terms of creative destruction, Stiegler argues indeed that psychopower promotes an economy of destructive destruction. Overall, biopower and psychopower express two distinct modes of violence: biopower characterizes itself through productive imperatives, while psychopower is inscribed in a logic of aesthetic destruction in which consumers are mere consuming consumer items[320]. For all these reasons, it is essential for Stiegler to rethink the imperative of autonomy and responsibility through the revival of care[321].

3.2.4 Care and Autonomy

Foucault shows interest towards care as a technology of the self and argues that it must certainly be something that contemporary societies should take inspiration from[322]. On the other hand, he was not arguing that Greek Ethics should be resuscitated. Paul Veyne writes:

> Greek ethics is quite dead and Foucault judged it as undesirable as it would be impossible to resuscitate this ethics; but he considered one of its elements, namely the idea of a work of the self on the self, to be capable of reacquiring a contemporary meaning, in the manner of one of those pagan columns that are occasionally reutilized in more recent structures[323].

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[320] Expression Stiegler borrows from Raymond Queneau. see: Bernard Stiegler, 'Within the limits of capitalism, economizing means Taking Care', in *Telemorphosis: Theory in in the Era of Climate Change (vol.1)* ed. Tom Cohen, (Michigan: Open University Press, 2012) p.104

[321] Stiegler refers couple of times to Hans Jonas' The imperative of Responsibility in *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[322] Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) p.350

[323] Paul Veyne, 'The Final Foucault and His Ethics', *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. I (Autumn 1993), 7.

It is thus to Stiegler that we owe the politicization of the Ancient model of subjectivation. Stiegler stresses the therapeutic powers of care when he updates this concept for the contemporary context. As Sophie Fuggle notes, Foucault mainly understood care as "souci", whereas Stiegler puts the emphasis on "soin"[324]. Stiegler thus transforms the Foucauldian ethos of existence, mostly self-exegetic, into a curative activity. But as it will be shown, it is the exercise of autonomy that constitutes for both the key element of care.

As discussed by Foucault in his series of lectures at the Collège de France in 1981-2, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*,[325] the question that motivates the principle of care is, "which tekhne do I have to use in order to live as well as I ought to live?"[326]The goal of the enterprise was to foster and nourish some self-respect (*dike*); a sense of worthiness that would be the originary impulse for living a healthy and virtuous life. However, care as technology of Self should not be seen as an early form of individualism or an excuse for narcissism. Self is for Foucault a potential, a relation of forces, an emergent set of properties the individual has to master in order to constitute himself as subject. Understood in this way, care as *tekhne* was presented above all by Foucault as the deployment of a means of self-governance, for the activity required in fact to find the right balance between the powers of passion and reason; to resist in order to gain autonomy. As Aurelia Armstrong puts it:

> Rather than imagining autonomy as an innate capacity for self-determination or as the achievement of freedom from all forms of social constraint, Foucault holds that it consists in a more modest practice of self-formation which depends on cultivating an "artistic" approach to those codes of conduct, patterns of identification and regulatory norms which are the cultural sources of the self. Thus, the degree of autonomy one enjoys will depend on the extent to which one is able to use these cultural sources of selfhood as resources in one's attempts to intervene in the formation of one's own identity. Foucauldian autonomy, then, is not opposed to social regulation. Rather, it consists in the struggle to subvert the project of normalization by wresting the power of regulation from the ends of disciplinary control in order to deploy this power in

[324] Sophie Fuggle, 'Stiegler and Foucault: The Politics of Care and Self-Writing', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.198

[325] Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet, cours au Collège de France (1981-1982)*, eds. François Ewald Alessandro Fontana and Frédéric Gros (Paris: Gallimard, le Seuil, Hautes Études, 2001)
[326] Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) p.348

> the service of self-creation[327].

In other words, what captures Foucault's interest is the creation and the governance of self through training (*askêsis*), that is, the production of the autonomous subject in the regulatory practice of care.

Care is for both Foucault and Stiegler the condition for self-constitution, identification and reflexivity. However, while the work of the late Foucault taught us to acknowledge the transformative effect that technologies have upon us, Stiegler pushes the Foucauldian influence a little bit further. Instead of viewing those as a mere material support, or hypomnemata, hence reducing technologies to a receptacle of human activity, Stiegler goes beyond this assumption and turns technics into the empirico-transcendental condition of the human. Having said that, not only can we elaborate a hermeneutics of the self through technological devices, but the relation to oneself is inevitably technologically enacted. Whereas Foucault may have sensed the organisational value of technologies and allowed us to think the significant inter-relation between the human and the technical field, the Stieglerian move is to posit their necessary concomitance. The individual, says the latter, forms himself as a singular being, through the bodily interiorization/exteriorization of technics, that is, the progressive adoption of skills from the repetitive use of the instrument. It is an individuation process insofar the individual gains autonomy through automaticity. Stiegler thus declares in an interview with Anaïs Nony:

> Auto is the common root of two words which are opposite in the philosophical tradition: automata and autonomy. To be autonomous in ancient Greek philosophy — although it is also still the case with Kant and even later, for example for the Frankfurt School— to be autonomous is the opposite of being in automatic behavior. And I disagree with that. I believe that this point of view, which is a very classical, metaphysical point of view, is completely wrong, because in reality, to become really autonomous you must integrate a lot of automatisms. For example, if you want to become an autonomous pianist you must transform your body into such a thing like the piano. But this is the case for all your knowledge, and knowledge is a set of automatisms incorporated in the body. [328]

In fact, Stiegler dismantles the Kantian opposition between autonomy and heteronomy. In addition to that, autonomy is not a given anymore or the mark of the

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[327] Aurelia Armstrong, 'Beyond Resistance: A Response to Žižek's Critique of Foucault's Subject of Freedom', *Parrhesia: A journal of critical philosophy* issue 5 (2008) p.27

[328] Bernard Stiegler, 'Bernard Stiegler on Automatic Society: As told to Anaïs Nony', *Third Rail Quarterly*, 5 (2015): 16-17

human, but a characteristic that must be taught and cultivated. Autonomy, Stiegler argues, is achieved through the adoption of heteronomy. On that issue, Foucault's and Stiegler's positions are not that different, insofar as they both suggest that the subject never ceases to be herself but might experience different degrees of autonomy, of resistance, or will to power. Put otherwise, autonomy requires discipline. As such, the autonomous subject is the one who navigates through a constraint of norms and procedures.

Finally, and this is what should be retained for the moment: both Foucault and Stiegler associate care with the exercise of autonomy. While Foucault makes of autonomy the finality of care, Stiegler reverses the issue in presenting autonomy as what *justifies* the exercise of care. But in doing so, Stiegler transforms what was understood by Foucault as a choice of existence[329] into a duty.

3.2.5 The Duty to Care

Technologies of psychopower contribute to the weakening of the social bond; they capture consciousnesses, and imprison individuals into shame and disgust.

The paralysis individuals are going through during the era of hyper-attentional technologies could be comparable to the *stultitia* pinpointed by Foucault in his analysis of Seneca's *De Tranquilita*[330]. The same way Foucault identifies the *stultus* as a form of self-neglect (*non-rapport à soi*) from the one who does not want him or herself, Stiegler argues that the general attitude of self-disgust and disenchantment which prevails today, is a state of sickness born from a disinterest from the self towards itself. Stiegler thus sees in the Hellenistic principle of care an exit and a cure that may enable us to combat what he calls the "reign of stupidity". Such a liberation implies the freeing of thought from the age of information in favour of technologies of spirit. By technologies of spirit, Stiegler means technologies that contribute to the expansion of

[329] Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) p.341
[330] Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet, cours au Collège de France (1981-1982)*, eds. François Ewald Alessandro Fontana and Frédéric Gros, (Paris: Gallimard, le Seuil, Hautes Études, 2001) p.128

knowledge and valorise these objects of knowledge. But this can only be done in preserving teaching, reveals Stiegler, a task rendered even more difficult now with the liquidation of adulthood and childhood. Indeed, the progressive infantilization of adults coupled with the licence new media offers to minors, subvert the generational identification process, essential for an individual to become responsible and enter the social sphere. For Stiegler, the re-establishment of a generational hierarchy requires the restoration of institutions, that is, the reintroduction of teachers and learners, majors and minors, educators and educated. It is about reasserting a model of instruction as the substitute of ignorance, an enterprise that has been neglected in Foucault's philosophy:

> Foucault's analysis of academic institutions never addresses public instruction as a historic process passing through the Enlightenment, that is, through "modernity", in the sense that he gives this word in his treatment of Kant. Most important, and reciprocally, Foucault does not seem to see the developing power of marketing and the historical regression it represents as the identifying characteristic of our globalized age, exempting it from problematizing the programming industries' power and the marketing strategies that are those industries' manifestation. As a result, obviously he also cannot see the war that marketing, as the "science" of societies of control, is waging against programming institutions[331].

The idea of education is central to individuation, and though both Foucault and Stiegler perceive care as the remedy for stupidity *(stultitia),* each approach the issue of transmission differently. Foucault insists on his reading that it is *educere* that stimulates the principle of care. This word is a synonym of help; the action of *educere* affects the subject's mode of being, and pushes the individual to want himself or herself. It is an "éduction", says Foucault, a mode of action on the subject's mode of being. Such an enterprise requires the figure of a guide, not here to *instruct* the individual with truths and theories, but to accompany him or her in the subjectivation process, so that in fact, the guide and the student mutually *construct* each other *through* technical supports. For Foucault, it is largely an encounter, a provocation of desire (*philia*) and of curiosity[332] that would lead the subject to experiment and surpass himself. Though Foucault does not deny during his lectures at the Collège de France the institutional aspect of the Hellenistic *Skholê*, he minimizes its importance to value

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[331] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.122

[332] This could be another point of divergence between Foucault and Stiegler. Indeed, Foucault thinks care through an economy of curiosity when Stiegler puts the emphasis on the necessity to develop an economy of attention, as it is through the consolidation of attention that one develops curiosity.

instead the relationship between the philosopher and the student. Care is in other words a principle of mutuality forged throughout the intimacy or friendship between the educator and the educated. Stiegler is right in that sense; Foucault avoids the question of public instruction. He rather demonstrates throughout his interpretation of Ancient texts that the adoption of an ethics presupposes the adoption of an ethical attitude. Stiegler, on the other hand, understands education in terms of *educare*, hereby emphasizing on the transmissional process binding the instructor and the instructed in a hierarchical relationship. Indeed, what prevails for Stiegler is the configuration of the individual through institutional programs. For Sophie Fuggle, this is where lies the whole irony of Stiegler's reappropriation of Foucault:

> Stiegler locates a duty of care in the nineteenth-century educational apparatuses criticised precisely for their lack of care by Foucault, who identifies them with normalising processes that produced knowledge about a subject not in order to nurture and develop individual subjectivity but rather to regulate, cure and control[333].

In this respect, Stiegler suggests that it is the duty of programming institutions to take care of the self.

Care is part of Stiegler's political program; a political program that is primarily aesthetic. This is rendered evident for example with the figure of the amateur[334], which Stiegler aims to return to. But Stiegler's aesthetics of self is quickly overshadowed by the demands of reason, so that the issue of creativity quickly flirts with the conformity of institutions. As we know, Enlightenment was described by Kant as the emergence of man from his state of self-incurred immaturity[335]. Yet, Stiegler transforms the "audacity to know[336]" of Aufklärung to a duty that involves the subjection to an

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[333] Sophie Fuggle, 'Stiegler and Foucault: The Politics of Care and Self-Writing', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.200

[334] The "amateur" is described by Stiegler in opposition with the figure of the consumer, so that the amateur is the one "who wants to know". *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010). p.70

[335] Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (London: Penguin, 2009)

[336] Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Pantheon Books 1984) p.35

authority, when care, as it has been emphasized earlier, is supposed to favour subjectivation. On Stiegler's sympathy to institutions, Oliver Davies notes;

> In *Taking Care* Stiegler salutes the vision of statesman Jules Ferry, who made secular state primary education compulsory in France in the early 1880s, in the following terms: 'for Jules Ferry it was a matter of *substituting secular sublimation for religious sublimation*' and, by making primary education a legal obligation, of instituting 'a positive power of sublimation – as a discipline of transindividuation that in turn fosters the political maturity that is the essence of *Aufklärung*'. Michel Foucault, in his account of disciplinary power and its institutions in *Discipline and Punish*, is accused by Stiegler of having failed to acknowledge this 'positive power of sublimation' and in particular of having failed to understand that the Ferry laws were democratising 'technological' instruments, in that they made it clear that the State's expectation of all of its children was that they accede to literacy and thereby to political maturity. Foucault failed to see the Third Republic's school system for what it was: a system of care designed to form deep attention on an industrial scale and thereby to make France a mature democracy. Foucault is not alone, Stiegler suggests, in his one-sided view of Republican schooling; his *ingratitude* and indeed his ignorance is felt to be typical of an over-privileged generation of theorists associated by Stiegler with May '68[337].

However, in fearing the withdrawal of authority, Stiegler falls into the trap he himself denounces; that of authoritarianism. The reason for that lies probably in his own account of Enlightenment. Indeed, Stiegler mostly retains from Enlightenment the triumph of reason over obscurantism, but in putting the stress on the rationalizing process of Enlightenment, he may fall right into what Foucault calls the 'blackmail of the Enlightenment'. Indeed, the risk of Enlightenment resides in subverting the philosophical *ethos*, understood as the practice of criticism through ontological investigations, for the systemization of instruction. The systemization of instruction, through the revitalization of a certain love for institutions, is nevertheless what Stiegler wishes to bring forward by the means of national education[338].

This system of metacare, such as national education, aims to disseminate in people's minds a sense of national culturalism, in straight opposition to the hollow individualism promoted by technologies of psychopower. Quite surprisingly, Stiegler compares the activity of care with the dedication to a cult[339]. Such an approach transforms the question of education, or care, into a procedure of normalization

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[337] Oliver Davis, 'Desublimation in Education for Democracy', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.173

[338] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.179

[339] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.178

grounded in faith, which is dangerous, not to mention puzzling, as faith is the opposite of critique. Yet, Stiegler sees in contemporary societies controlled by industries and economic powers, a social disaster, due to the liquidation of culture; a disappropriation of the past that leaves populations unable to be part of their own future.

3.3 KEY POINTS

While Foucault views the ancient principle of care as a desirable art of living, he does not clearly elaborate on its political implications and rather defends the arts of the self on an aesthetic level. Stiegler, on the other hand, explicitly turns care into a political imperative, insofar as it aims to cure the ills of techno-culture.

Stiegler argues overall that individuals only exist in and through technics. Yet, he claims that new technologies are drastically impacting the quality of human existence, for they progressively deprive people from their autonomy and their freedom to think. As the agents of cultural capitalism, technologies of psychopower impede on the psycho-social formation of the individual, so that a meaningful relation to oneself and aesthetic objects in general is hardly possible.

Stiegler thus draws an unflattering portrait of our current technoculture and worries about the future of the human. In *Automatic Society: The Future of Work* [340], he is indeed mortified with the automatization of existence and the state of permanent connectivity this automatization has introduced. According to Stiegler, we are currently living in societies of hyper-control, for our everyday life depend on "mobile devices such as the smartphone, domestic devices such as web-connected television,

[340] Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society: The Future of Work*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016)

habitats such as the smart house and smart city, and transport devices such as the connected car"[341].

Stiegler is right when affirming that a majority of people consume technologies, but do not know how to *use* them. He is also right when hinting at the necessity to be educated about the digital. But though it is undeniable that digital technologies are opening new processes of individuation, he tends to have a paranoiac discourse concerning the controlling power of computer technologies. Indeed, as much as the digital is now a key component of our existence, its effectivity as a system of control and surveillance is far from being infallible. The second part of the thesis proposes therefore to assess Stiegler's vision of psychopower, articulated around the pervasiveness of systems of control and the impoverishment of meaning, in engaging in a discussion with Turkle, Galloway and Chun.

Three points will be examined:

— The psychological and ontological intimacy between technologies and the human

— The aesthetical power of the network

— The effectiveness of panoptical control

[341] Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society: The Future of Work*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) p.16

PSYCHOPOWER AND NEW MEDIA

INTRODUCTION
PSYCHOPOWER, CONTROL AND THE PANOPTICAL

Sartre, Foucault and Stiegler share a common interest for the aesthetics of the self as they are convinced that the conscious relation to oneself is crucial for the development of a meaningful existence in which one could be (relatively) free within current socio-political circuits. Sartre describes selfhood as an imaginary construct, whereas Foucault stresses that selfhood emerges throughout power relations. Stiegler, for his part, argues that selfhood is constituted in and through technics. All three suggest in this respect that it is because no self is given to us that one needs to elaborate a reflective relationship with oneself. All three agree that the cultivation of the self implies at its core the cultivation of freedom, insofar as the conditions for the realization of freedom are located in consciousness. Finally, all three see in the cultivation of the self a way to escape, resist or sublimate a negative force; for Sartre this is the other, for Foucault the 'eye of power[342]' as we shall see now, and for Stiegler the technologies of psychopower.

From Foucault to BigBrotherism:

Before moving on to the second half of the thesis which intends to assess Stiegler's insight on psychopower, drawing on the works of Turkle, Galloway and Chun, I would like to reflect on Foucault's influence on Stiegler's understanding of the power-control paradigm[343]. As I have explained in the previous chapter, Stiegler's conception of psychopower is directly inspired by Foucault's biopolitics. Biopower is

[342] Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p.146-165

[343] Considering that Sartre has not debated the political implications of his aesthetics of the self, leaving it into the domain of psychoanalysis, I am going to focus essentially on Foucault and Stiegler for the moment.

defined as the government, that is, the regulation and administration of bodies[344]. For Stiegler, biopower has evolved into psychopower insofar as it is not the normalisation of bodies that constitutes the main political issue, but the standardization of consciousnesses. Control is for both theorists a key term which remains largely unquestioned, insofar as it is immanent to the dynamic of power-relations. While Foucault's model of biopower hints at the control of behaviors in which the moral reformation of the individual comes as an effect of the disciplining of the body, Stiegler shows that apparatuses of psychopower intend to directly control minds. This does not mean that the body is completely removed from the equation; the fact that Stiegler puts the emphasis on the psychic rather than the somatic only indicates that in the current strategies of power Foucault's theory of the management of life and its living is not sufficient to apprehend with precision how the governance of mental life plays out in the current age of media. As such, it would be wrong to simply assume that psychopower has replaced biopower, even though the latter might seem to grow more obsolete with time. Instead, they coexist.

Despites its anachronisms, Foucault's contribution remains largely influential, as Stiegler acknowledges in *What Makes Life Worth Living*.[345] But what if the Foucauldian legacy was not enlarging but narrowing or skewing our conception of power? In his article 'Social Control After Foucault', Michalis Lianos writes that ideologies of control have led to an unjustified mistrust towards systems of social organization and are still feeding our paranoiac phantasms:

> Theoretical 'BigBrotherism' undoubtedly seduces us as much with its simplicity and its capacity to mark our thoughts, as with its interpretation of control and domination. However, after scratching the surface, one rapidly discovers the limits of these analyses that look at contemporary control as part of a larger scheme of socio-political domination or hegemony. An obvious pitfall is that we are asked to accept a 'Big Brotherism' without 'Big Brother'. This, besides the injustice done to Orwell, speaks more of our need to subject the development of a highly technological environment to conceptual schemata that refer to the pre-modern world or at most to the emergence of modernity (…) Building socio-technological dystopias peopled by clones and cyborgs responds to this heterogeneous melange of perspectives which fails to take into account an essential point: the organization and the nature of power cannot remain immutable and subject to atemporal criteria whilst sociality transforms itself in a radical way. Once the

[344] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) see chapter 'Biopower, Psychopower and Grammatization' pp. 124-143

[345] Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living?,* trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) p.84

> dynamics of the social universe are disregarded, it is easy to produce dark visions by simply focusing on the likely operation of future technological systems, which will presumably become more complex and accurate in their interaction with human behavior, social, private or intimate[346].

This mistrust towards structures of social organization is what I propose to explore for this introduction; it shall be read as a preview for the last chapter in which I will draw on Wendy Hui Kyong Chun to examine the effects of ideologies of control in our conception of freedom. As such, I intend to show that Stiegler's Foucauldian approach of psychopower perpetuates a paranoiac account of control and surveillance. I will explain that such misunderstanding derives from a certain misconception of Bentham's original project on the panopticon.

Bentham's Panopticon and Foucault's Prison?

Foucault's biopolitics present a positive model of power insofar as social structures were, according to it, designed to optimize human resources and effectively organise populations. According to Foucault, biopower has progressively complemented and replaced sovereign power. Sovereignty "permits the foundation of an absolute power"[347] which "encompasses the totality of the social body"[348] and is mostly defined "in terms of the relationship sovereign-subject"[349]. Hence, the power of the sovereign was mostly restricted to the ability to take life or let live. Biopower rather aims at the mobilization and enhancement of life than at its oppression. A common metaphor used to illustrate the effects of biopower on the administration of bodies is that of the panopticon, which Foucault borrows from Jeremy Bentham. Foucault describes the panopticon as follows:

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[346] Michalis Lianos, 'Social Control After Foucault', *Surveillance and Society*, 1/3 (2003) p.418
[347] Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p.105
[348] Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p.104
[349] Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p.104

> The Panopticon is a ring-shaped building in the middle of which there is a yard with a tower at the centre. The ring is divided into little cells that face the interior and exterior alike. In each of these little cells there is, depending on the purpose of the institution, a child leaning to write, a worker at work, a prisoner correcting himself, a madman living in madness. In the central tower, there is an observer…able to see everything without anyone being able to see him.[350]

In many respects, Foucault's reading of the panopticon struggles to convince Bentham's scholars. Bentham's specialist Anne Brunon-Ernst explains for example in her article 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the plural Panopticon' that Foucault's understanding of the utilitarian model of the perfect surveillance state is incomplete, for Foucault concentrates most of his reading on the prison. She reminds us that Bentham developed four models and that the prison was only one of them. The prison panopticon is the commonly known one; it involves, as mentioned in the quote above, a circular building and a central inspector. The second model is that of the pauper panopticon, which was largely inspired by its predecessors in terms of architecture. However, it involves a more complex system of management and is designed especially for the indigents and the disabled. So far, these two versions do not contradict or challenge Foucault's interpretation very much. The third model is called the chresthomathic panopticon, which is a structure designed for pedagogical purposes. Here again, we are confronted with an all-seeing master teaching his or her pupils without being seen. In this paradigm, Brunon-Ernst says, the purpose is not control but the transmission of knowledge. Though it involves a certain level of management, the aim is purely pedagogical. The fourth model is that of the constitutional panopticon, sometimes called the reversed panopticon. In this architectural arrangement that Bentham imagined in order to draw the ideal government, the ministers of the state are under the eye of the public opinion; it is not the masses that are disciplined, but the government. In exposing these four models, Brunon-Ernst laments the fact that Foucault's understanding of Bentham's panopticon has not stressed enough these differences. Instead, Foucault's investigations focus on the prison discipline and seem to expand its internal structures of control and surveillance to the other three panopticons. If Foucault's account of the prison is not

[350] Passage from 'Truth and Juridical Forms' as quoted by Anne Brunon-Ernst 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticon', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.29.

inaccurate, according to Brunon-Ernst, it does not give scholars the full picture. To her mind, Foucault's reading of Bentham implies that these four panopticons share a set of defining features that can be reducible to the carceral system. She argues that:

> The four different panopticons are not only different names given to the same project at different times in Bentham's long career; they also exemplify very different panoptic features, which resist any single all-compassing name-tag[351].

She claims in this respect that panopticism is plural and cannot be understood as a broad system of surveillance, for the architecture of the prison cannot be simply applied to that of the hospital or the state administration. She thus concludes that the wide reception of Foucault's work in academia has led to the assumption that 'prison discipline pervades all of Modern Society'[352]. In this respect, Foucault's reappropriation of Bentham's legacy is misleading.

Brunon-Ernst's concerns about Foucault reading of Bentham may be questionable, insofar as she seems to read Foucault's theory of power as a coercive system. Even though Foucault has mostly drawn on Bentham's utilitarian conception of the ideal prison, he is not merely suggesting that our society has become carceral. Besides, he was aware of the nuances of Bentham's project[353]. As such, he does not merely conflate the prison discipline with that of other institutions. In fact, Foucault's argument hints at something more general. Christian Laval notes for his part that Foucault saw in Bentham a "technologist of modern governmentality[354]". In other words, Foucault salutes Bentham for having understood that power is before all a structural principle; the key of the panopticon was architecture[355]. Besides, the society in which we live is not, for Foucault, that of the panopticon but that of panopticism,

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[351] Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticon', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.25

[352] Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticon', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.41

[353] Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p.148

[354] Christian Laval, 'From *Discipline and Punish* to *The birth of Biopolitics*, in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.44

[355] Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p.148

which is quite different. The panopticon refers to Bentham's theory, while panopticism designates an abstract system of power-relations which is optical and architectural[356]. For Laval, Foucault is not implying that our modern society shall be reducible to Bentham's prison, that is, a social system in which there would be a centralized form of power and in which populations are seen without being able to see. On the contrary, Foucault is aware that things are more complex. First of all, he knows that disciplinary societies are coming to an end and that another form of power is growing: he is also aware that bluntly applying Bentham's theory of the perfect prison to the current political system would be anachronistic and erroneous[357]. As such, Foucault would likely accept Bentham's fourth version of the panopticon, which Brunon-Ernst claims is absent from his texts[358], for it corresponds to a democratic form of power in which the many exerts an influence over the few. We know that Foucault's account of biopower intends to show in detail that power is not simply something that comes from the bottom-up and that it can be distributed and dispatched throughout institutional circuits. Indeed, this decentralized account of power will be taken up by Galloway who explicitly draws on Foucault on this point and brands him as the thinker of protocol. I will discuss this issue in more details in the second chapter of this second part of the thesis.

So far, I have stressed that according to Brunon-Ernst, Foucault propagated a carceral conception of the panopticon. Laval, on the other hand, explains that Foucault's understanding of Bentham was more nuanced, but he acknowledges that this nuance has been underemphasised and therefore not properly taken into account in academia[359]. I find myself on the side of Laval on this issue. I would also be tempted to argue that some aspects of Brunon-Ernst's reading of Foucault is symptomatic of this academic misunderstanding. The conflation between the panopticon and the

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[356] Christian Laval, 'From *Discipline and Punish* to *The birth of Biopolitics*, in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.45

[357] Christian Laval, 'From *Discipline and Punish* to *The birth of Biopolitics*, in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.45

[358] Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticon', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012)

[359] Anne Brunon-Ernst and Guillaume Tusseau, 'Epilogue: The Panopticon as a Contemporary Icon?', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.197

prison building is therefore not so much imputable to Foucault as his followers. Nevertheless, what I find compelling in Bruno-Ernst's argument is that she insists that Bentham's four models of the panopticon were not all apparatuses of control, but conceived more largely as communication tools. Hence, control was not inherent to practices of surveillance. Foucault, on the contrary, assumes control as a principle immanent to the panopticon. Considering Foucault's popularity in academia, whether this concerns the field of politics, philosophy, sociology or to be more specific, that of surveillance studies, such a reading is not innocuous. Most scholars, argues Brunon-Ernst, got familiar with Bentham's panopticon through Foucault's lens. As such, most scholars are tempted to think the panopticon as a mere device of control, the same way they may be tempted to hastily compare the organisation of the social to a prison-like structure in which the Foucauldian reading of Bentham would stand as the paranoiac truth of our age. According to Brunon-Ernst and Guillaume Tusseau, studies on surveillance, control and power cannot escape the decisive influence of Foucault and remain to a certain extent panoptical.

At this stage, a few words must be said about the panoptic and the panoptical. The panoptical should be distinguished from the panoptic insofar as the panoptic is connected with the root principles of Bentham's panopticon, whereas the panoptical is 'a derivative adjective' that describes more abstract qualities of the panopticon 'as mediated through Foucault'[360]. This does not mean that Foucault's theory of control and surveillance has been unconditionally accepted or praised. Brunon-Ernst and Tusseau argue that the emergence of neologisms such as 'cybernetic panopticon', 'Ban-opticon', 'Myopic panopticon' or 'Global panopticon', to name a few, conveys the idea that "the panoptic paradigm is no longer a fitting model to interpret present-day surveillance issues[361]". Nevertheless, it shows that "society has moved to a post-panoptical age, which shares some of the features of its panoptical Foucauldian father and panoptic Bentham grandfather, as one inherits traits from a relative"[362].

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[360] Anne Brunon-Ernst and Guillaume Tusseau, 'Epilogue: The Panopticon as a Contemporary Icon?', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.187

[361] Anne Brunon-Ernst and Guillaume Tusseau, 'Epilogue: The Panopticon as a Contemporary Icon?', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.196

[362] Anne Brunon-Ernst and Guillaume Tusseau, 'Epilogue: The Panopticon as a Contemporary Icon?', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.196

Social Control After Foucault:

It is undeniable, in this respect, that Foucault's panoptic conception of the social has perpetuated the idea of a triangular relationship between power, control and surveillance. Deleuze's account on the societies of control is perhaps the most significant example that comes to mind. According to Deleuze, the disciplinary societies described by Foucault are in decline, so that we are now confronted with the emergence of a new model of power, which is that of societies of control[363]. Disciplinary societies "initiate the organization of vast spaces of enclosure[364]" in which "the individual never ceases passing from one closed environment to another"[365]. With the rise of societies of control, segmented spaces are disintegrated and become part of a continuous and malleable circuit in which there is no clear distinction between the outside and the inside, the public and the private: "in the disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barrack to the factory, while in the societies of control one is never finished with anything — the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation"[366]. While disciplinary societies articulated a system of surveillance through administrative numeration, societies of control deploy means of trackability. In this situation, control is our "immediate future"[367]. As such, Deleuze says, "there is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons[368]". In his account of the societies of control, Deleuze revives the presence of control as the unavoidable effect of power structures, in which the latter are both conceived as totalizing (pan) and surveilling (optical).

[363] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, vol. 59, 1992, pp. 3–7
[364] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, vol. 59, 1992, p.3
[365] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, vol. 59, 1992, p.3
[366] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, vol. 59, 1992, p.5
[367] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, vol. 59, 1992, p.4
[368] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, vol. 59, 1992, p.4

As suggested by Brunon-Ernst and Tusseau, current theories of control, whether agreeing or disagreeing with Foucault's insight on the panopticon, remain intrinsically connected to his approach. Deleuze is no exception to the rule. However, he is not the only scholar to have engaged with Foucault's panoptic conception of power in order to highlight its limitations. A common criticism would be to point out for example that Foucault's theory has not taken into account the role of pleasure, which is essential to the expansion of the consumer society. Galloway will tackle this issue in showing that procedures of control, such as protocol, enable the individual to enjoy his or her freedom. These procedures intend to minimize the risks through the deployment of safety measures. As such, they turn pleasure and the experience of freedom itself into an effect of control that can be programmable and manageable. Stiegler, for his part, will openly criticize Foucault for having failed to conceptualise the individual as consumer[369], insofar as biopower targets the worker[370]. If we follow the logic of Brunon-Ernst and Tusseau, Galloway and Stiegler, though proposing to expand or revise Foucault's panoptic paradigm of power, are doomed to be Foucauldian. And if they are, it is not simply because they engage in a dialogue with their predecessor, but because, as Deleuze, they take the effectivity of control for granted.

Foucault's insistence on the eye of power is paranoiac, for it makes observation "a constant directing principle"[371]. In this respect, Brunon-Ernst argues that this overemphasis on the gaze led scholars to believe that the panopticon intends to deploy a system of continuous visibility and transparency. This may be the case for the first model, but not the fourth model, that is, the constitutional panopticon. Indeed, in this structural arrangement, the individual could choose at any moment to retrieve herself from the public eye in order to enjoy some privacy. This configuration echoes a lot to what happens in social networks insofar as users can select contents they feel comfortable to share with others and keep less flattering elements of their lives for themselves. This analogy may be too simple, but the key idea I would like to highlight

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[369] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.131-132

[370] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.174

[371] Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p.146

is the following: while one may be under the impression that current social networks embody a panoptic system of surveillance in which the many (the users) are seen by an unseen minority (anonymous agents of economic powers or company leaders), this system of visibility is not as coercive or menacing as often imagined. Indeed, one is free to not engage in the panoptic game. As mentionned earlier, one could answer to Brunon-Ernst that Foucault himself did not understand panopticism as a coercive power. Moreover, he was aware that the panopticon did not establish a circuit of permanent visibility and was elaborated instead on the dual dynamic between visibility and invisibility. Yet, Foucault mostly drew his theory of power on the controlling, surveilling and modelling structures of the panopticon, hence giving scholars a very partial idea. For Bentham, the disciplinary function of the prison was one only one element of his project of governmentality in which control and surveillance were not as preponderant as for Foucault.

What I retain from Brunon-Ernst's account is that despite the presence of surveilling structures, the activity of surveillance is neither a fact or a guarantee. This is what I will cover by the means of Chun's work in the third chapter of this second part of the thesis, though I will apply this idea to automated and algorithmic structures of surveillance. Besides, Brunon-Ernst explains that if "one understands panopticism as supervision, control and correction, then the panopticon defeated its ultimate purpose"[372]. Taken this way, the aim of the panopticon was not to install a hegemonic system of surveillance and transparency in a fashion that may remind us Orwell's Big Brother in the novel *1984*. Instead, "the aim of surveillance was for the people monitored to internalise surveillance so that surveillance would in the end be necessary"[373]. Put otherwise, "panopticons are built so that no more panopticon will be needed"[374]. Hence, the panopticon is not the emblem of disciplinary societies as it is the case for Foucault; it does not intend to produce more surveillance, it aims for the reverse, namely, the nihilating of surveillance. As such, the panopticon was supposed

[372] Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticon', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.40
[373] Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticon', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.40
[374] Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticon', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012) p.40

to be symptomatic of our progressive withdrawal from the disciplinary. Yet, one could counter that internalising discipline up to the point that no discipline will be required in the future could be a higher and more sophisticated form of panopticism. Such a stance would give again the upper-hand to Foucault. I do not discard this possibility. Instead, I simply state that Bentham's theory of the panopticon was supposed to be, in its original conception, a temporary model of surveillance in which power and control were not the end, but the collateral effects of the panoptic endeavour. On this issue, it is fair to assume, as does Brunon-Ernst, that Foucault's description is incomplete.

One further issue I would like to tackle before moving on to the second part dedicated to new media is that of the effectivity of control. Foucault, Deleuze, Stiegler and Galloway have all theorized control, giving either a panoptic (Foucault), a panoptical (Deleuze) or a post-panoptical (Stiegler and Galloway) account of it. I would like to stress in these last paragraphs that the presence of measures of control does not mean that they are necessarily operating, nor that they are running successfully. It does not mean either that they are exerted on individuals or that they produce any effect on them. Kevin D. Haggerty argues for example that Foucault misses out an important aspect of the panopticon, which is that of failure:

> The targets of surveillance as depicted in *Discipline and Punish* are largely passive. What little agency they display is directed inward upon themselves in the form of an almost inevitable process of acquiescent 'soul training'. The movement of panoptic principles into new settings is presented as entirely frictionless. Surveillance appears to proliferate because it represents a self-evident increase in the functionality of power (…) Focusing exclusively on the panopticon as an idealized model of power, Foucault elides the fact that even in Bentham's day the panopticon was ultimately an unsuccessful political project, with Bentham serving as the failed lobbyist for his utopian architectural dream[375].

Moreover, Foucault's account of panoptic power stresses the importance for individuals to be conscious that they are under scrutiny. Hence, the surveillance project can only be operational if its subjects are aware of its presence and of its internal dynamics; "without such an awareness there is no pressure towards 'soul training'"[376]. In this respect, Foucault's panopticism is unfit to describe the present structures of

[375] Kevin D. Haggerty, 'Tear Down the Walls: On Demolishing the Panopticon', in *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond*, ed. David Lyon (Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 2006) p.34

[376] Kevin D. Haggerty, 'Tear Down the Walls: On Demolishing the Panopticon', in *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond*, ed. David Lyon (Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 2006) p.34

surveillance, which aim at the collecting of data. As Haggerty suggests, monitoring procedures are routinely conducted without individuals even knowing. And if this is the case, one could wonder if this absence of awareness, without completely nullifying the effects of control, does not attenuate or limit the so-called influence of power structures. Haggerty, for his part, is not trying to minimize the impact of dataveillance, yet he believes that Foucault has given too much emphasis to the "normative stance"[377] of the panopticon and has therefore contributed to the spread of a dystopian and diabolical model of surveillance.

Finally, Michalis Lianos states that studies of social control are stagnating since Foucault's intervention on the issue. Like Haggerty, he deplores the demonizing of systems of control and surveillance, which are often reduced to simplistic structures of domination. To support his claim, Lianos uses the example of the CCTV system, implemented on road networks. This dispositif, he says, can be used or become useful in several respects; it can be about the introducing of "repressive surveillance (traffic offences), detective surveillance (stolen vehicles), the regulation of traffic flow (reduction of congestions)", but it can also reveal itself as a "support for planning (recording information on all aspects of traffic), accident prevention (transmission of information to drivers on obstacles to anticipate) or the improvement of access times for emergency services (breakdowns, accidents)"[378].

Galloway uses a similar analogy and illustrates the effects of contemporary orgasitional structures with the image of the road network. Using the highway as an example, he aims to show that, far from being restrictive, systems of social control can turn out to be liberating. If Lianos and Galloway would agree on this issue, the overemphasis Galloway gives to control would however not be satisfying for Lianos. As he argues, control is *one of* the potential effects of monitoring structures, not its grounding principle[379]. The CCTV system can serve for multiple purposes and these purposes or activities cannot be "divisible into categories"[380]. This is the reason why it is crucial to not hastily conflate systems of social organization with those of control.

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[377] Kevin D. Haggerty, 'Tear Down the Walls: On Demolishing the Panopticon', in *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond*, ed. David Lyon (Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, 2006) p.35
[378] Michalis Lianos, 'Social Control After Foucault', *Surveillance and Society*, 1/3 (2003) p.415
[379] Michalis Lianos, 'Social Control After Foucault', *Surveillance and Society*, 1/3 (2003) p.416
[380] Michalis Lianos, 'Social Control After Foucault', *Surveillance and Society*, 1/3 (2003) p.415

Besides, the latter are not always deployed in order to homogenize social behavior. In some cases, it is items and not individuals that constitute the ultimate object of control. Lianos writes on this issue:

> The magnetic tagging of products against theft is by now an old practice. A magnetized element (button, band, etc.) is attached or inserted into the protected object. Magnetic sensors exist at all the exits of the protected space and an alarm is set off if a magnetic tag passes between. Besides stores and shops, most libraries use such systems. It is clear from the start both for the user and for the observer that this is an anti-theft device. The sensors are visible at the entrances and, if the system is to be effective, it is necessary to detect and isolate objects taken in from outside which might set off the alarm.

Hence, the anti-theft device does not intend in any way to monitor the customer's behavior, nor is it particularly concerned to track down the movements of a piece of clothes or a DVD; it only detects if the product crosses the limits of the delineated space[381]. Though the presence of an anti-theft device implicitly warns the customer to not steal, hence contributing to the spreading of certain norms and values, its aim is only to prevent shoplifting.

Facing the Panoptical:

In conclusion, while the panopticon is historically dated, panoptical thought is still in effect in the research field, as Deleuze's societies of control, Stiegler's account of psychopower, and Galloway's perspective on the protocological indicate. While I will explore in more details the psychological impact of new technologies on the formation of the individual through a discussion between Stiegler and Turkle, who both appeal for more prudence towards our addictive relationship with screens and computers, I will then take some distance with Stiegler's work. By the means of Galloway's contribution on new media, the fifth chapter argues that technology cannot be reducible to the techno-logical, that is, an oriented system of meaning that either increases or decreases signs and values. Yet, as I mentioned before and as I will examine further, Galloway gives too much importance on the procedures of control. Though portraying control as a positive effect of the network, rather than a mere restrictive measure, Galloway reproduces the Foucauldian normative move in understanding control as the grounding principle of social structures rather than one of

[381] Michalis Lianos, 'Social Control After Foucault', *Surveillance and Society*, 1/3 (2003) p.419

its side effects. Finally, the major issue to be tackled may not simply be that of our relationship with technologies, or the expanding influence of networks of psychopower, but more broadly paranoia itself. This is what the work of Wendy Hui Kyong Chun suggests. This is not to say that technologies of today are not affecting our modes of concentration or that the political reality of psychopower, as told by Stiegler, should be discarded. Instead, I state that a bigger emphasis should be given to the vulnerability, that is, the limited power of systems of socio-digital organization. This in order to counterbalance Stiegler's vision of psychopower in which control appears oppressive and totalizing. Hence, the purpose of the last chapter will be to demystify control itself to finally argue that human freedom remains part of the equation. Indeed, one of the major misconceptions of our time is to believe that safety is incompatible with freedom, so that one is always condemned to give up one or the other, claims Chun. More significantly, ideologies of control make the mistake of overestimating the power of technologies and their actual efficiency. As such, mistrust subsist about digital media insofar as they are often accused of embodying a sophisticated apparatus of surveillance.

IV- SHERRY TURKLE AND THE MIRROR: TECHNOLOGY AS SECOND SELF?

"Mirrors, literal and metaphorical, play an important role in human development. In literature, music, visual art, or computer programming, they allow us to see ourselves from the outside, and to objectify aspects of ourselves we had perceived only from within".

Sherry Turkle[382].

The purpose of this chapter will be to examine Turkle's description of computers as mirrors of the mind and to show that her research can be read in complementarity with Stiegler's. To do so, this chapter will essentially focus on *The Second Self*. Stiegler argues that technologies are new for the very reason they reconfigure our temporal experience through 'real time' which is the absorption of time within time. The simultaneity and the standardization of subjective experience deprives us of our freedom to think for we are taught to identify with brands and commodities. In short, Stiegler deplores the poisonous effects of mass culture on our creativity and singularity, as much as he deplores the exploitation of desires by entertainment industries[383]:

> The programming industries, and more specifically the mediatic industry of radio-televisual information, mass-produce temporal objects heard or seen simultaneously by millions, and sometimes by tens, hundreds, even thousands of millions of "consciousnesses": this massive temporal coincidence orders the event's new structure, to which new forms of consciousness and collective unconsciousness correspond[384].

Technologies of real time such as television, radio and more broadly speaking, the internet, bond us to the rhythm and ambitions of globalised capitalism; a socio-cultural system turned towards excessive production and excessive consumption. Digital media only contributed to exacerbate this state of affairs. The internet has become a

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[382] *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*, Sherry Turkle, twentieth anniversary edition (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England : The MIT Press, 2005) p.146

[383] Christina Howells, 'Le défaut d'origine' the prosthetic constitution of love and desire', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Gerald Moore and Christina Howells (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.148

[384] As quoted in Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. Stephen Baker (California: Stanford University Press, 2011)

private market of exchange, an "electronic Leviathan[385]", in which populations are, knowingly or unknowingly, subjected. The analogy to the biblical monster is not innocuous for it illustrates Stiegler's tendency to portray the internet as an algorithmic[386] monster driven by economic interests and owned by private companies. I have stressed that it is not so much technological devices per se but the ideology they represent, spread and contribute to reinforce by the very fact of their presence, that constitute Stiegler's main concern. Nevertheless, it is hard not to conflate the medium

[385] The electronic Leviathan refers to the digital technical system as a whole and its algorithmic governmentality.
Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society: The Future of Work*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p.127-128

[386] Stiegler's account of the algorithm is debatable, though. It is tempting to accuse internet of being voyeuristic and exploitative. Criticising the power of Google and the ascendency of algorithmic capitalism, Stiegler argues that computerized machines are progressively depriving us from our ability to think His characterization of the digital as a Leviathan, that is, as a gigantic individual "exerting its power over the entire earth" finds a resonance with Yuval Noah Harari's own account of the internet. In *21 Lessons for the 21st century* Yuval Noah Harari argues that as far as things go, algorithms will be able to predict our tastes in proposing artworks all specially designed for us. His point is to say that not only work will become automated, but the artistic life itself, and eventually our emotions. His approach is for the majority speculative, but Harari seems to take it as an inevitability.

Harari gets even more cynical, suggesting that the algorithm can also control the unpredictable and give the impression of randomness to the consumer. In this context, nothing escapes the control of the algorithm. Yet, one could respond that insofar as one is still given the possibility to manipulate the algorithm and to make the adjustments, one is still left with the capacity to choose. Harari has thought about this potential objection and replies that this apparent liberty has nothing to do with us being mysteriously free. Our decisions are the product of neuronal activity, and neurons themselves tend to behave like algorithms. In consequence, artificial intelligence is likely to anticipate every of our whims, so that we would only have to react positively or negatively to the algorithm's proposition. This up to the point the algorithm would know us enough to not disappoint anymore, hence depriving us of depriving us of the possibility to choose. For Harari, the power of the algorithm is limitless, as he affirms that the algorithm can even produce next commercial successes, including music hits. All this is only a matter of time. In this respect, Harari's discourse is founded on paranoia as he conflates the possibility of automatization with its actuality. The whole argument of Harari lies indeed in his conviction that the automatized production of musical hits constitutes our immediate future. However, he offers no concrete example to support his claim. He only makes conjectures and predicts the worse.

Luciana Parisi proposes, for her part, to investigate the unpredictability of structures of control and leads us to reconsider current models of power and freedom. Questioning the current understanding of the computational domain, Luciana Parisi claims in her work on *Contagious Architecture* that popular assumptions regarding the rigidity of algorithms are in the wrong. She argues that "the open-ended and negentropic forces of self-organization, cultural analysis has denied algorithms the potential of being anything other than a finite set of rules"
In this respect, Parisi claims that algorithms may constitute the core of the designing processes of today, but are imbued with infinity. Hence, Parisi argues that systems of control rely on unaccountable elements and patternless data. The algorithm does not predict, but reveals the immanent process of programming. As such, she invites us to reconsider the actual power of the algorithm and the rationality of programs.
See: Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018) and Luciana Parisi, *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics, and Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013)

with the message; Stiegler often draws his conclusions from the contents of the medium[387] and defines symbolic misery as an impoverishment of meaning.

In the face of destructive capitalism, Stiegler makes the reintroduction of desire, which is a desire *to be*, the kernel of his argument and politics of self. As discussed in the third chapter such an endeavour necessitates for Stiegler the reinvestment of the figure of the amateur and, most notably, the reactivation of the self-discipline of care. In more concrete terms, it also involves a politics of open source. By open source, Stiegler means the open access to knowledge through the implementation of free software and the free teaching of computer programming. Hence, his political agenda is to slowly transform the digital technical system into a public institution run by volunteers, in order to ensure a democratic and productive access to technologies. Said otherwise, Stiegler's defence of open source technologies intends to make of the internet an indeterminate space of shared-knowledge that belongs to everyone and no one; a free structure that valorises the user's experience (in contrast with the figure of the consumer).

To my mind, Stiegler's approach suggests three things:

1) It seems to long for the return of the internet in its early form, namely, the cyberspace of the 1990's, notorious for being "free" and "public"[388].
2) It conflates the medium with the content, insofar as psychopower designates strategies of power initiated by *programming industries*, hence blaming both the industry (the power structure) and the program (the message).
3) It assumes a correspondence between the content/medium and the user. This is rendered evident in Stiegler's appreciation of technics as the concretization of drives or desires. But to argue this is to acknowledge the medium as the mirror of the human and vice-versa.

[387] See his analysis of the Canal J's T.V campaign in *Taking Care of Youth and The Generations* or his praise of Wikipedia as a contributive platform valorising open-access knowledge in his interview with Ariel Kyrou in *L'emploi est mort, vive le travail !*

[388] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.37-38

For all these reasons, I believe that engaging a conversation between Stiegler and media theorist Sherry Turkle, known for theorizing computers as the mirror of human minds and for having promoted cyberspace as utopian space for self-exploration at the beginning of her career, is necessary and potentially enlightening in relation to the way we may conceive of the internet nowadays.

4.1 LEARNING TO LIVE WITH TECHNOLOGIES

What are the effects of new technologies? How do they modify social relations and our sense of self? These are the questions Turkle is concerned about. She argues in *The Second Self* that the plasticity of virtuality offers a vertiginous opportunity for the individual to explore her identity. Indeed, the boundlessness of the internet seems to give us all the tools to experience freedom. Alexander Galloway will be critical of this issue, arguing that it is control and not freedom that grounds the internet. This point will be developed further in conjunction with his reading of Foucault in the following chapter.

Yet, Turkle becomes more cautious when suggesting in *Alone Together* that social networks, in the proximity they promote and defend, alter the authentic experience of intimacy, deteriorating the spontaneity of human relations and weakening our sense of empathy. In an interview, she shares the development of her work as follows:

> I wrote my first book really in an effort to get people like me, humanists and anthropologists and psychologists, to look at these things with an open heart. That was about at the beginning of sociable robotics, the creation of machines that pretended to care about you. That appeared to love you. The other big development was devices with the ability to distract you all the time. I was very positive on the whole about machines that you physically went to. That you had to pull up a chair to. But once these things were with you all the time, I really wanted to study how the world changes with that possibility[389].

[389] Sherry Turkle, 'Sherry Turkle: I am not anti-technology, I am pro-conversation', *The Guardian*, by Tim Adams (October 2015)
https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/oct/18/sherry-turkle-not-anti-technology-pro-conversation

As such, she argues that the digital age encourages us to shy away from the demands of friendship to prefer instead the companionship of our phones and, "as the programs got really good", to prefer "the illusion of friendship without the demands of intimacy[390]". It could be tempting to view her as a pro-computer theorist suddenly converted to pessimism, but the progression of her thought is not so radical and Turkle considers herself neither "pro-computer"[391] nor technophobic.

Turkle does not seek to unleash a crusade against the current digital culture, though she intends to bring a certain level of awareness on our addictive use of electronic devices[392]. As such, her work aims to show how our affective relationship with computers leads us to expect more from technologies and less from each other. "As technology develops, it shows us what it wants[393]", writes Turkle, hence taking

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[390] Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2015, p.7

[391] Sherry Turkle, 'Interview with Sherry Turkle: 'We're Losing the Raw, Human Part of Being With Each Other', Catherine De Lange, *The Guardian* (May 2013) <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/may/05/rational-heroes-sherry-turkle-mit>

[392] In *Reclaiming Conversation*, Turkle investigates the impact of mobile conversation technologies such as text messages, phone apps and online chatting through interviews with a mix range of individuals. The object of her inquiry is that of the future of conversation in the face of new technologies that are designed in tight alignment with human cognition. She expresses her reserves regarding our addiction to mobile technologies. Our dependence to the online world, where the flow of information is constant, continuous, and almost overwhelming, has led to the fear of missing out. In other words, the emotional regime of today is that of maintaining oneself updated, that is, keeping up with the flow of news and events. Moreover, our tendency to hide behind the screen has led to a generational fear of loss of control and a low tolerance for the unpredictable. Online interactions make us feel safe, anonymous and/or invulnerable; we can edit, tailor our profile and show our best persona through well-chosen photography and thoroughly thought texts. Yet, despite an apparent increase of social interactions, instantaneous messaging services impoverish the quality of social relations, Turkle argues. For her, the key issue at stake concerns the authenticity of conversation; a conversation that we need to reclaim, that is, to make our own. It is not that conversation is disappearing with the rise of mobile communications, but it is undeniably losing its spontaneity, continuity and humanity. Turkle makes a direct correlation between conversation and empathy. It is throughout our ability to talk to each other that we develop a deep and true interest for our interlocutor. Conversely, digitally mediated communications decrease empathy and intimacy in general. To claim back the power to talk rather than message each other constitute, for Turkle, the first step for a healthy future in which technologies would leave a free space for human relations instead of vampirizing them. According to Turkle, we are caught in a vicious circle in which our, perhaps natural, discomfort towards the unpredictability of human relationships has developed into a dependence to online messaging services. Such reliance on communication technologies has unfortunately increased the magnitude of this discomfort, thus giving us another pretext to hide behind the screen. This endless cycling is what should be addressed if we do not want to be completely dehumanized, Turkle argues. When fustigating the algorithmatization of our cultural environment (see footnote 386), Harari shows indeed that this fear of losing control (or lack of curiosity in Stiegler's terms) is precisely what industries are exploiting in proposing to adjust their products to the wants of people, up to the point that choice itself would become obsolete. The problem is — and Turkle, Harari and Stiegler seem to all agree on this issue — that we may be bargaining our own humanity for the sake of comfort.

[393] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011)

issue with the sudden intensified autonomisation of technology[394]. Once there to accommodate us, it turns out that we are now trying to accommodate ourselves with the wants of new technologies. This is provoking a major disruption in the relationship between humans and machines. A disruption also noticed by Stiegler who describes in his later works how we came to relinquish our own autonomy in the context of the automatic society, alienated by the very thing that is supposed to free us. Stiegler perceives a form of regression in human evolution, as we are no longer able to produce what we consume. For Stiegler, we passed from an active to a passive relational mode. This psychological passivity towards our own technological environment reinforces the power of consumerism and contributes to the decrease of intelligence [395].

It is thus urgent for both Stiegler and Turkle to put technologies back in their place in order to reinforce a sense of community. The deterioration of human relations Turkle diagnoses, is however not the result of technologies per se, but of the intimacy one cultivates towards them. She thus describes the relationship between human beings and technologies as a love story which has progressively gone bad. In *Reclaiming Conversation*, she recalls that when her book *Alone Together* was released in 2011, it was often negatively received, precisely because she was alluding to difficulties the general audience preferred to stay blind to.

> But now, only a few years later, the atmosphere has changed (…) Now, we begin to take the measure of how our communications compel us. We have learned that we get a neurotechnical high from connecting. We recognize that we crave a feeling of being "always on" that keeps us from doing our best, being our best. So we allow ourselves a certain disenchantment with

[394] However, for Stiegler, it is less an issue of autonomisation than automatization, insofar as he acknowledges from the outset the autonomy of technical development. This is what he and Leroi-Gourhan coined as technical tendency. In this case, the autonomy of technics remains bound to its relationship with the human, insofar as the autonomisation process is enacted through the instrumental maieutics between the technical object and the human mind. Automatization designates, on the other hand, the current algorithmic governmentality in which social development is conditioned by calculations and less and less by human intervention. Though this nuance between autonomy, automaticity and automatization is not really addressed in Turkle's work, her statements converge towards the same broad issue: new technologies are too invasive and as such, alter the quality of human existence.

[395] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.34

what technology has made possible[396].

The work of Turkle stresses the psychological implications of our addiction to technologies. Stiegler, on the other hand, puts a broader emphasis on human ontology, insofar as he claims that the technological change we are facing today is a change that concerns our very way to be human. As covered in the previous chapter, Stiegler is perfectly aware of the effects of screen technologies on people's mental development. Such psychological regression, he believes, was underestimated by Foucault's anatomo-politics[397]. Overall, the issue for Turkle is to first reactivate empathy, while Stiegler's concern is turned towards the cultivation of autonomy[398]. Finally, both acknowledge the necessity to take action if we want to preserve our human values, as well as our freedom.

4.2 THE METAPHOR OF THE MIRROR AND THE MYTH OF NARCISSUS

In the introduction of *Alone Together*, Sherry Turkle states that "technologies, in every generation, present opportunities to reflect on our values and direction[399]". This assertion denotes her volition to present technologies as modern mirrors, insofar as technologies interrogate us as human beings. As such, Turkle describes computers

[396] Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015) p.17

[397] Sophie Fuggle, 'Stiegler and Foucault: The Politics of Care and Self-Writing', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.197

[398] I have already explained in the third chapter how Stiegler understands autonomy. I have stated that, for Stiegler, the cultivation of autonomy is grounded in the heteronomy of technics. It is important to note that Stiegler is reluctant to develop a discourse of restoration of autonomy, probably because of its Kantian overtones. Instead, it is the singularity of individuation that should be pursued. Yet, Stiegler's emphasis on *singularity* seems to imply a return to the "romantic self" which could be close to Sartre's. However, Stiegler rejects such account and simply states that what he understands as singularity is the Simondonian process of individuation, that always involve the formation of the I (the psychic) in relation to a We (the collective). It could be therefore misleading to argue that Stiegler's philosophy is a philosophy of autonomy. But if I use the word "autonomy" instead of "singularity", it is because I believe that the former is more adequate to describe what Stiegler has in mind than the latter. I also use it for rhetorical effect, if I may say, in order to contrast autonomy, not with automaticity, but with automatization. Hence, autonomy shall be read, in this thesis, as the Simondonian process of individuation in which one develop oneself as singular individual.

[399] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011) p.19

as *evocative*, mostly because they are pro-vocative. What these technologies provoke is self-reflection, for they bring about a culture of self-imagery, a culture already pointed out by Foucault when investigating the motivations at stake behind the Greco-Roman practices of self[400]. In fact, all technologies are evocative, in the sense that they are tied to the production of self-image. They bring forth a certain eroticism of the image, of the Self presented as artistic project. In *What do Pictures Want?* W. J. T. Mitchell wonders about the power of images on the human psyche. He states the following:

> The notion of images as life-forms always equivocates between questions of belief and knowledge, fantasy and technology, the golem and the clone. The middle space, which Freud called the uncanny, is perhaps the best name for the location of images as media in their own right. [401]

For her part, Turkle thinks that there is something very specific about computers, something very new in the way they provoke us: "The computer is a new mirror, the first psychological machine. Beyond its nature as an analytical engine lies its second nature as an evocative object"[402] .What is at the crux of Sherry Turkle's argument here, is precisely this notion of the uncanny, which comes back regularly throughout her work. As evocative objects, computers confront us with the experience of the same and the other. Turkle suggests that, as a means of psychological compensation, technologies respond to anxiety; "We are insecure in our understanding of ourselves, and this insecurity breeds a new preoccupation with the question of who we are. We search for ways to see ourselves"[403]. Turkle describes the mirror as a medium in which human beings encounter and familiarize themselves with their own image. Her account diverges from Stiegler's, who rather apprehends the mirror as a sort of inside-out

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[400] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self vol.3*, trans. Robert Hurley (Middlesex: Harmondsworth, 1990) p.57

[401] W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images.*(Chicago, Illinois: London; University of Chicago Press, 2005). p.295

[402] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.279

[403] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.279

through which consciousness is at the same time projected and crystallized. Yet, both are drawing on Lacan's conception of the mirror stage, which stresses its mimetic-formative effects:

> It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context as an identification, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image — an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, "imago"[404].

But they each propose a different emphasis. For his part Stiegler aims to draw attention on the mirror's formative effects on the individual's consciousness. As such, what he describes is "the evolutionary emergence of human cognition as a succession of 'mirror stages' in which the human achieves self-reflexive consciousness through its manual engagement with the material world[405]". Turkle rather focuses on the mimetic effects of the mirror as she suggests that our relation with technology is mostly of that sort, insofar as we repeat what technologies teach us[406]. But in Turkle's perspective, the mirror also offers the possibility of another point of view. It acts as a perceptual angle by the means of which the self can be grasped as a foreign entity. Hence, the mirror epitomizes the uncanny because it enables the conciliation between the identical and the non-identical. Put otherwise, it concretizes the experience of self-as-other.

As a prolongation of her metaphor of the mirror, Sherry Turkle refers to the story of Narcissus, which illustrates well, to her mind, the strange nature of technologies. Besides, Narcissus' story shows how she problematizes the notion of virtuality as a representational field:

> The story of Narcissus is usually read as a warning against self-love. Narcissus saw his image in the water and fell to his death because of his desire to touch it, to be closer to its beauty. But there is another way to understand the story. Narcissus fell in love with what appeared to him to be another. This image of that other person fascinated him because it objectified a sense of

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[404] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York, London; W. W. Norton and Company, 2007) p.76

[405] Christopher Johnson, 'The Prehistory of Technology: On the Contribution of Leroi-Gourhan', in *Stiegler and Technics*, edited By Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.38

[406] Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015, p.27

beauty of which he had felt only a vague inner sense[407].

Narcissus' beauty is processed through technologies (here the surface of water which acts as a natural form of mirror). In that sense, Narcissus is more than a mythical figure falling in love with himself, but a tragic character experiencing the technological objectification of his body to an image. As Jean Baudrillard says, without an image, the body is a "transparent nothing". It is through the image that Narcissus gains a certain sense of selfhood. However, in staring at his own image, Narcissus let himself being consumed by that image, instead of *assuming* (or appropriating) that image. Here, Turkle interprets the fable as the story of someone falling in love not with himself but with another, or perhaps, with himself *as* another, that is, at his virtual self. Narcissus is confronted with his double; a double which is similar and dissimilar, a double which is him and not him. Thus, the image endorses two functions; it reflects Narcissus' real beauty, but distort the real in duplicating it. Narcissus stays paralyzed and stares into the water, because he is hypnotized by the image of himself. This obsessive contemplation seals his fate.

At this stage, Turkle portrays a rather negative version of narcissism, insofar as in the mythical story of Narcissus, the mirror stage has a deadly outcome. In letting himself drown in water, Narcissus aims to reach this world of images he fell for, hereby performing a radical jump from the real to the virtual. While referring to this Ancient myth, Sherry Turkle lays in fact the foundation of what is going to be her main interpretation of virtuality, insofar as she claims the latter to be deploying a field of (self)-imagery. As such, the virtual is a mirage, Turkle suggests. However, Turkle's account of narcissism is not entirely negative. She in fact suggests that the development of a certain sense of narcissism is crucial to the process of identity formation. Let us go back to the mirror stage and therefore to Lacan. Sean Homer reminds us indeed that we owe to the latter the popularization of the mirror-image. According to Lacan's approach, the mirror is primarily seductive because it captures

[407] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.146

attention.

> Lacan took the idea of the fascination and capturing properties of the image and above all how we shape ourselves according to that image. Lacan's innovation in 'The Mirror Stage' was to combine the phenomenological distinction between subject and ego with a psychological understanding of the role of images and the constructed nature of the self through the philosophical category of the dialectic[408].

Self-formation revolves around a certain nurturing of self-love, Lacan argues. Turkle seems to agree with that, though the importance of primordial self-love appears more clearly in Stiegler's thought than in hers.

Indeed, Stiegler argues that primordial narcissism is indispensable for the development of a healthy social life. One can only love others if one is capable of loving oneself in the first instance. Stiegler thus emphasizes the importance of primordial narcissism[409] in having recourse to Freud, rather than Lacan, and states that cultivating a form of auto-eroticism (a desire for oneself and a desire to be) is of political necessity, for capitalism does not simply exploit labor anymore but our desires. These desires are, as I have covered in the previous section, directed towards commodities, not objects and even less towards ourselves as individuals.

In fact, both Turkle and Stiegler suggest on the larger scale that the formation of narcissism is prosthetic. As such, they draw on Winnicott's theory of the transitional object. For Winnicott, the transitional object can be exemplified by the child's first possession which he learns to care for and cherish. This transitional object is already the sublimation and the symbolic transposition of maternal care[410]. For Stiegler, we

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[408] Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) p.22

[409] Primordial narcissism shall not be confused with primary narcissism. "Primordial narcissism" is a Stieglerian term that derives from Freud's primary narcissism. The latter designates infantile self-love. If Stiegler uses the "primordial" rather than "primary", it is because he believes that self-love is essential to the development of the feeling of existing. The existential issue is absent from Turkle's account, but it would fit her approach.

[410] Christina Howells writes: "The first *pharmakon* is, according to Bernard Stiegler, the child's first possession, or 'transitional object'. Psychoanalysis thus allows Stiegler to bring together the child's chronological beginning and the condition of possibility of the pharmacological – that is to say, technical – life of an individual. This object, which negotiates the differentiation between subjectivity and objectivity, is said to owe its place in psychoanalysis to clinical observation, and is attributed a distinct reality within the child's early development: it appears, says Winnicott, 'at about four to six to eight to twelve months'. Therefore, unlike Freud's primitive horde of brothers, or Plato's Egyptian tale of the origin of writing in the *Phaedrus*, Stiegler's primal scene of pharmacology is not projected onto a mythical past, nor are there any warnings, as in Jacques Lacan's mirror stage, that its position in a

struggle to produce transitional objects of love, which are always to some extent, objects of self-love. The reason for this struggle is that we are presently conditioned to consume. Hence, instead of cherishing objects, we destroy them[411]. For Turkle, on the other hand, the theory of the transitional object justifies her account of the computer as an evocative object, that is, an object that mediates personal growth. Like Stiegler, she emphasizes its openness, insofar as the transitional object, which is an object of care, deploys the transitional space through which encounter between self and not-self is possible. In this respect, they both conceive the transitional object as "the point of departure for the formation of a healthy psychic apparatus[412]".

Overall, this portrayal of the computer as the mirror of the human presents a key issue which is that of technologies being seductive[413]in their capacities to respond to our insecurities and stimulate or develop our feelings of self-love. It means more largely that our relationship with technologies is always to some extent pathological and addictive. For Stiegler, it seems that the issue we are confronted with today is that of the liquidation of primordial narcissism. Turkle argues for her part that it is less a lack but an excess of narcissism that is problematic nowadays.

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diachrony is deceptive, even if it allows for 'wide variations'. According to Stiegler, however, the object does not so much *exist* as *consist* within the child's history. In Stiegler's work, 'consistence' applies to objects that, by being infinite, open onto a world of idealities where the development of the spirit – which makes life worth the pain of living – becomes possible. It is in this sense that Stiegler speaks of the *pharmakon* as the origin of the life of the mind/spirit."
Christina Howells, ''Le défaut d'origine' the prosthetic constitution of love and desire', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.152

[411] Christina Howells, ''Le défaut d'origine' the prosthetic constitution of love and desire', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) pp.151-164

[412] Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living? On Pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity, 2013) p.3

[413] Stiegler, on the other hand, describes new technologies as addictive. In an interview for the guardian, Turkle prefers to stay cautious about such characterization: "If you are addicted to heroin you have to give it up completely, go cold turkey. Here it is a different assignment. I am not planning to give up my phone. I just need to know what it is good for." Though acknowledging that we are becoming increasingly dependent to technologies, she suggests that this dependency is precisely caused by the seductive character of technologies, that is, in the way "they pretend to care". The issue is therefore narcissistic, that is, self-love, when Stiegler argues that it is precisely the lack of self-love that causes us to rely morbidly on technologies.
See: Sherry Turkle, 'Sherry Turkle: I am not anti-technology, I am pro-conversation', *The Guardian*, by Tim Adams (October 2015)

4.3 THE ROBOTIC MOMENT

While Turkle and Stiegler share the same concern regarding the future of the human, their understanding of the role of technology in human life differ. Stiegler, for his part, regards the human as a technical being, but also as quasi-mythical figure, for the particularity of the human is to be without origin. The human is an invention grounded in the groundlessness of technics. Technics is always already there and therefore always in advance. In that sense, human beings are prosthetic characters, because they are always already pro-grammed in technics. Unlike Stiegler, Turkle's work does not view technology as a programming activity, but as a support that can be programmed[414]. In this respect, the field of technology requires a programmer, which suggests that human beings are indeed the creators, the producers and/or the masters of technology. This means that the role of technology is to "support[415]" human life. While elaborating on the relationship between children and computers, Turkle argues that the computer supports forms of personal development, of which she identifies three principal stages; that of metaphysics, mastery and identity. Though they are all examined with the same interest by Turkle, mastery remains the most important of the three[416], for it enables the transition from the affective to the cognitive. In defining technology as a programmed support, Turkle treats technology as textual, that is, as mere surface of inscription. Stiegler's deconstructivist account, on the other hand, presents technology as what enables discursivity, hence suggesting that textuality is already technical.

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[414] Note that Turkle defines the activity of programming as "premeditated control". Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.104

[415] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.192

[416] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005)) p.192

Our growing discomfort towards artificial intelligence is, according to Turkle's investigations, explained by the fact that technologies are behaving like us, *as if* they were us. However, she also acknowledges that this fear of identity usurpation is a belief, rather than a truth. Technologies possess their own alterity that we cannot fully comprehend:

> In an important sense the computer is irreducible. It is hard to block the temptation to personify the computer by saying what it "really" is, hard to block the suggestion that the computer "thinks" by saying what it "really" does. It is hard to capture the computer by seeing it in terms of familiar objects or processes that existed before it was invented. The computer is not "like" anything else in any simple sense[417].

This renders our experience with machines uncanny in the Freudian sense of the term (*unheimlich*) because technologies are familiar and unfamiliar at the same time[418]. On this issue, Turkle's approach has the merit to not reduce particular artefacts to overarching structures. In choosing to observe the computer as uncanny, Turkle aims to grasp the computer in its singularity; she thus departs from its singularity, that is, its alterity. Stiegler does the exact reverse in conflating technology with general

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[417] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.248

[418] Turkle writes in *The Second Self*: "For Freud, the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) was that which is "known of old and long familiar" seen anew, as strangely unfamiliar", see: Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.1

Lydia Liu gives in *The Freudian Robot* a more extensive definition of the uncanny, comparing Freud's investigations on the strange character of the automaton with the earlier work of Ernest Jentsch. She compares their respective interpretations of A. Hoffman's short story "Der Sandmann", rearticulating their source of their disagreement. While Jentsch suggests it is the uncertainty and the ambiguity between animate and inanimate that cause the feeling of the uncanny; Freud argues that the uncanny is the expression of the return of the repressed. As such, it is the unconcealment of what should have remained concealed. Regarding Jentsch's and Freud's reading of Hoffman's story, Lydia Liu writes: "Jentsch attributes the uncanny effects of the Sandman story to the artistic skill with which Hoffmann manipulates intellectual uncertainty in Nathanael and in the reader who identifies with him as the narrative unfolds: Is Olympia animate or inanimate? Interestingly, the word *unheimlich* appears in Hoffmann's story a number of times, often in con- junction with Olympia, which apparently constrained Jentsch's interpretation (…) On this ground, Freud rejects Jentsch's argument and decides to look elsewhere for an answer to the sources of the *unheimlich*. Freud, who cannot tolerate the idea of intellectual uncertainty as an explanation, introduces his alternative reading by displacing the automaton as the problem of the uncanny with something else, namely, Nathanael's ocular anxiety about the Sandman".

Lydia Liu's quote: Lydia H. Liu, *The Freudian Robot: Digital Media and the Future of the Unconscious* (Chicago, ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2010). p.212-213

tendencies, such as that of grammatization[419], so that his understanding of technology does not address much the singular or the exception.

Going back to the notion of the uncanny, Lacan teaches us that it concerns not only the strangely familiar, but also refers to the horrible, the hostile, and the suspicious[420]. Consequently, portraying the computer as uncanny is already to mystify technology into a sort of monster, but it is also to acknowledge its alterity. While Stiegler presents technology as *different*, he does not address its otherness. The reason for that is that technology is not just an entity or collection of entities, for Stiegler, but an activity that enables the encounter with the other. Yet, it could be said that Stiegler, in contrast to Turkle's methodology, does not take the opacity of technology into account enough[421]. However, the opacity identified by Turkle remains a problem and our tendency to anthropomorphize technology results from this opacity we cannot quite understand.

> Computers are certainly not the only machines that evoke anthropomorphization. We often talk about machines, and even to machines, as though they were people. We complain that a car "wants to veer left." We park it on a slope and warn it to "stay put." But usually, when we "talk to technology," we know that any voluntary action we may have ascribed to a machine is really a series of unambiguously "mechanical" events. We know that the pressure of the emergency brake will prevent gravity from pulling a car down a hill. But when we play chess with a computer and say that the computer "decided" to move the queen, it is much harder to translate this decision into physical terms[422].

Though anthropomorphism may, to a certain extent, enable us to acknowledge the alterity of technology[423], it also appears symptomatic of our failure to think

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[419] By Grammatization, Stiegler means the process of formalization of human behavior into writing (and technics in general) which, according to him and his reading of Simondon, is constitutive of the western mode of individuation. Though Stiegler questions the current process of grammatization throughout which human behavior is reproduced, copied and anticipated into endless codes and algorithms, it is not necessarily negative. Like most of his key concepts, grammatization is ambiguous, that is, pharmacological.

[420] Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014)

[421] in fact, technology is often associated with clarity and understandability in Stiegler's work as he defines it either as a grammatizing process, a mean of orientation, but also an orthothetic development. See Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2009)

[422] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.249

[423]For Jane Bennett, anthropomorphization allows both identification and differentiation.

"In a vital materialism, an anthropomorphic element in perception can uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances-sounds and sights that echo and bounce far more than would be possible

technologies *per se*, so that we remain stuck in this uncanny, and perhaps frustrating, relationship with the machine. On this issue, Turkle does not offer any solution and maintains anthropomorphism as naive, but evocative of our experience of technology, which is the uncanny experience of the other. This stance resonates with Stiegler as the latter acknowledges that technologies are always mysterious in some kind and that we cannot fully understand them. Hence, one will always experience a certain degree of naivety in relation to its technical environment.

In *The Second Self*, Turkle investigates individuals' eagerness to compare themselves to machines, a mode of comparison that is essentially projective:

> As computers become commonplace objects in daily life—in leisure and learning as well as in work—everyone will have the opportunity to interact with them in ways where the machine can act as a projection of part of the self, a mirror of the mind. The Rorschach provides ambiguous images onto which different forms can be projected. The computer, too, takes on many shapes and meanings[424].

The reason of our fascination-repulsion for technologies lies in the ambiguous images technology projects of ourselves. Yet, she also suggests that, unlike the Rorschach test, this relationship is not exclusively projective, but also constructive: "When you create a programmed world, you work in it, you experiment in it, you live in it"[425]. What Turkle means is that technologies offer a medium for us to explore ourselves, to construct and shape or reshape our identity. This could sound like a Stieglerian move if she was not reducing the experience of technology as merely subjective, when Stiegler argues for his part that technology is equally constitutive of the objective.

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were the universe to have a hierarchical structure. We at first may see only a world in our own image, but what appears next is a swarm of "talented" and vibrant materialities (including the seeing self). A touch of anthropomorphism, then, can catalyze a sensibility that finds a world filled not with ontologically distinct categories of beings (subjects and objects) but with variously composed materialities that form confederations. In revealing similarities across categorical divides and lighting up structural parallels between material forms in "nature" and those in "culture," anthropomorphism can reveal isomorphisms"

See: Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2010) p.98-99

[424] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.20

[425] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.21

However, this divergence may find an explanation with the tradition of thought the two descend from. Stiegler draws on phenomenology, which ties the experience of the subjective with the objective through the intentionality of consciousness necessarily constituted through the object, so that the object is equally constitutive of consciousness itself. Turkle gives on the other hand a psychological and psychoanalytical account of technology in which technology remains a scripture surface for mental activity. Technology is therefore constructive insofar as it posits itself as an object in which the human mind can be reflected. And in the era of the algorithmic self, this principle of self-reflection has been taken to a new level:

> There is the hope that self-reflection could perhaps be made more efficient by technological intervention. The list of candidate technologies is already long: a computer programmed to be have in the manner of a therapist; devices that help you track your physiology for patterns that will help you understand your psychology; programs that analyze the words in your diary and come up with a diagnosis of your mental state[426].

Once again, Turkle's psychological account of technology converges towards Stiegler's phenomenological approach and the conclusion they bring up is still the same: individuals and machines are caught in an pathological relationship which is on the verge of becoming morbid. In fact, Turkle's investigations suggest that the individual's propensity to humanize the inanimate is the expression of this affective relationship, which is, however, not inherent to the relation itself, but the result of our interactions with tools and machines. However, with the democratization of computers, a new stage has been reached; while we used to give human characteristics to objects of our own production, Turkle's work shows that, with the growth of artificial intelligence, we are now keen on technomorphizing ourselves. She thus states that "where we once were rational animals, now we are feeling computers, emotional machines[427]".

While the intellect was a property long reserved to human beings in the history of philosophy, insofar as it was constitutive of our ontological difference, the fact that it has become programmable, implementable into machines, forces us to reconsider

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[426] Sherry Turkle*, Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York; Penguin Books, 2015, p.81

[427] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.285

our identity. What makes us human? What constitutes our specificity? The growing intimacy we share with machines overturns all our certitudes about humanity, argues Turkle. For her, it is not that we constitute ourselves *through* technologies, but rather that we model ourselves *with* technologies. This distinction between the *with* and the *through* is crucial here, for in her point of view, technologies are evocative objects. If they are evocative, it is because they trigger something visceral in us, so that one cannot stay indifferent towards the machine:

> People sense the presence of something new and exciting. But they fear the machine as powerful and threatening. They read newspapers that speak of "computer widows" and warn of "computer addiction." Parents are torn about their children's involvement not only with computers, but with the machines' little brothers and sisters, the new generation of electronic toys. The toys hold the attention of children who never before sat quietly, even in front of a television screen. Parents see how the toys may be educational, but fear the quality of children's engagement with them[428].

New technologies "challenge" our notion of mind. What she means is that technologies alter (either maximizing or minimizing) the already formed, so that technologies always come afterwards, as an addition of the human, whereas for Stiegler, technologies stand as an already-there. This leads both theorists to apprehend the rise of digital technologies differently. There is no principle of imitation for Stiegler, no mirroring effect, only a co-evolution. On the other hand, Turkle argues that in growing intimate with technologies, we lose a certain form of humanity, that leads us to expect more from artificial intelligence and less from each other. The robotization of the social atrophies our own sociability; a sociability which is thought as an innate characteristic of the human. There is in consequence a loss of authenticity.

It may be once again a matter of jargon. Turkle acknowledges that the social is technologically mediated, but argues that new technologies modify the quality of social space(s). Stiegler would agree with that. But he would specify that the social is technologically *enabled*. Hence, the so-called nature of social space is not altered, but it has certainly taken a questionable turn in which the quality of human existence has become impoverished. For Turkle, the problem seems to lie in the nature of the media, whereas for Stiegler, the point of contention shall be found in the process of mediation itself. This means that the issue is structural, orgasitional, before being imputable to

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[428] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.19

specific technical objects. The other point of divergence seems to concern the very relationship we seemingly cultivate with technologies. Indeed, Turkle argues that the relation of *mimesis* between human beings and computers reinforces a proximity between the two; we are growing closer to computers, becoming dependent to smartphones, and isolating ourselves from others.

Stiegler claims instead that we have been already cut off from our technological environment despite this impression of proximity. The challenge of today is to restore the intimacy between the object and the individual. For Turkle, new technologies do not put an end to the possibility of intimacy; they instead forge new relationships, less profound, but still intimate, in the sense that they cultivate an impression of presence; that of companionship[429].

As the architect of new intimacies, robots and computers may lower down this concept of intimacy to reduce it to the notion of closeness, but do not annihilate it: "Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other. We'd rather text than talk"[430]. In this respect, connection is still a form of relation, though superficial, argues Turkle. Combatting this superficiality implies the revalorization of intimacy as presence, instead of as closeness. To achieve this, we must take our distance from technologies. For this reason, Turkle thinks it necessary to put machines back in their place. It is in putting technologies in this adequate place, that individuals will be able to reinvest theirs. For Turkle, there is still a place left for us: "Apps can give you're a number; only people can provide a narrative. Technology can expose mechanism; people have to find meaning"[431] .

Once again, the aim of these last paragraphs was not to oppose Stiegler's and Turkle's views, but to show how they complement each other, while offering some points of contrast that, I believe, can only enrich their respective approaches. The fact

[429] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011) p.1
[430] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011p.1
[431] Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2015, p.81

that Turkle refers to specific case studies[432] in which she took part herself enables us to have a more concrete approach of the technological environment. Stiegler, for his part, remains often vague and rarely offer examples to rely on. They rather constitute a starting point to his thought, such as the case of Richard Durn who gave him the opportunity to reflect on the loss of the feeling of existing[433]. But these examples, except for the myth of Epimetheus and Prometheus, do not constitute the core of his thought and rarely serve as compelling illustrations of difficult concepts.

Finally, what strikes me in Turkle's and Stiegler's works is that they both apprehend technologies as modulators capable of intensifying or diminishing human skills, values, and the quality of existence in general. And though they take different routes, the object of their final concern is the same: how can we preserve our humanity?

4.4 CYBERSPACE: UTOPIA AND HETEROTOPIA

Having explained how Turkle came to conceive technologies as mirrors of the mind, this following section intends to show the further implications of such metaphorization, insofar as her work links technologies to personality and subjectivity. While using the metaphor of the mirror, Sherry Turkle puts the stress on the notion of duplication, so that what ties us to the machine is mimetism. A mimetism that interrogates our own perfectibility and which is the reason of the seductive power of technologies over us:

> The experience of a game that makes an instantaneous and exact response to your touch, or of a computer that is itself always consistent in its response, can take over. It becomes gripping, independent of anything that you are trying to "do" with it in an instrumental sense[434].

[432] One of Turkle's research interest concerns the companionship of robots. She thus reflected on the impact of computational creatures such as the Tamagotchi or the Furby on children. She realised that children were capable to care for these robots and create a bond.
[433] See introduction and the relevant footnote on Richard Durn.
[434] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.87

Our relations with computers, machines and robots in general change the very way of our being human, so that we have a responsibility to reflect on this issue. According to Turkle, we rely too much on technologies, up to the point that we do not feel like facing ourselves. Like the myth of Narcissus, we are blinded by our own reflection, smitten by the image. More than a mirror in which one can see what he or she desires to see, the virtual world offered by internet/cyberspace is a space of illusions, an ideal gateway, and an alternative to real social spaces.

While reporting people's experience with video games, Turkle emphasizes for example the positive contribution of the virtual/cyberspace in the construction of one's persona. She thus discusses how videogames helped individuals to either gain confidence, release frustration or canalize outbursts of violence. Hence, as far as her account suggests, virtuality appears to be therapeutically beneficial as it enables the individual to live a parallel life, a more livable life perhaps, and compensate for one's flaws and weaknesses. In virtuality, the imaginary takes over the real, insofar as one can be whoever one wants. As Turkle states:

> The obese can be slender, the beautiful plain. The fact that self-presentation is written in text means that there is time to reflect upon and edit one's "composition", which makes it easier for the shy to be outgoing, the "nerdy" sophisticated.

Such role-playing enables one to absent oneself from one's real situation, to escape one's social condition, one's race, sex or gender, in order to become someone else. Life on screen creates a sense of inner self and outer self, online and offline identity, socially inhibited or disinhibited personality. As such, cyberspace offers a space of infinite freedom and infinite power, infinite self-discovery and self-reinvention. In some sense, it fulfils one's desire for totality. And for all these reasons, cyberspace represents an ideal world, that is, a utopia.

Turkle's portrayal of cyberspace is utopian, I argue, because it presents cyberspace as the perfect mirror of the human, but not only. The concept of utopia often serves to theorize a perfect social order. It is, literally speaking a no-place, a placeless place. As a literary genre, utopian visions are not much different from science fiction, as they intend to portray, from Plato to Thomas More, an improved vision of our world. Yet, utopias do not simply draw perfect future places one can dream about or strive to achieve. Instead, such narrative technique proposes to *reflect* on the

political, social or economic struggle of its time. In that sense, a utopia is a mirror because it offers an alternative to the real. However, a utopia remains ideal, that is, non-real. This means that it does not exist.

Insofar as Turkle's account of cyberspace/internet always imply a tension between the real and the virtual, the subject and the object, the online and offline world, it strikes me as utopian. As suggests her counting of the myth of Narcissus, the virtual proposes a spectacle of images; it is imaginary, illusory and phantasmagoric. The virtual does not propose a space of its own and remains dependent to the subjective experience to which it is the representation. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun criticizes Turkle for reducing online interactions to a mere conglomerate of personal desires and states that "cyberspace does more than reflect back; it is more than a virtual location we traverse in order to reconstitute ourselves[435]". Hence, it is misleading to describe cyberspace as utopian as it does not allow cyberspace to be anything else than the true and transparent incarnation of subjective life.

Manuel Castells argues for his part that we are faced with a virtual world which cannot be defined as completely virtual, that is, as an abstraction or negation of the real, for there is something very tangible about it. According to Castells, cyberspace offers more than a representative image of oneself, the illusion of compensation or a therapeutical catharsis. Discussing the emergence of the digitized society, the media theorist claims that virtuality is in fact our reality[436].

> It is a system in which reality itself (that is, people's material/symbolic existence) is entirely captured, fully immersed in a virtual image setting, in the world of make believe, in which appearances are not just on the screen through which experience is communicated, but they become the experience[437].

His vision may correspond to what Foucault has theorized as "heterotopia". Whereas a utopia is a placeless place where everything is good and perfect, a heterotopia is a

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[435] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.55

[436] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition with a new preface (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell publications, 2010) p.403

[437] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition with a new preface (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell publications, 2010) p.404

place where things are either different from the established social order, or inverted. Unlike utopias, heterotopias are real places:

> [Heterotopia offer] a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality[438].

Heterotopias are other spaces that may be modelled like utopias or dystopias and plunge us into a different reality, challenge the continuity of time and space, stand in-between the real and the imaginary. Examples of heterotopias may include for Foucault cemeteries, which are sacred spaces for the dead, modelled as counter-sites of the living world; colonies which are disrupting conventional spaces in invading foreign territories; museums that challenge the continuity of time by the very fact they exhibit old pieces of art in a modern space; but also boats. The latter is perhaps probably the best example of heterotopias because it is a floating piece of space that "exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea[439]". And finally, the mirror.

For Foucault, the mirror has the particularity to be both utopic and heterotopic; a particularity that may well correspond to the nature of cyberspace that is neither real or ideal. The mirror is a placeless place because it is both present and absent, both physically there and imaginary, there and not there, virtual and real. In this case, the virtual is not a mere prolongation of space, or the slippage of the real to the non-real, but the juxtaposition of the real onto the imaginary and vice-versa; it is the combined, though contradictory, experience of presence and absence. As placeless places, mirrors distort the traditional notions of sites and places. Foucault thus explains:

> The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements; formally, we can describe these relations as series, trees, or grids. Moreover, the importance of the site as a problem in contemporary technical work is well known: the storage of data or of the intermediate results of a calculation in the memory of a machine, the circulation of discrete elements with a random output (automobile traffic is a simple case, or indeed the sounds on a telephone line); the identification of marked or coded elements inside a set that may be

[438] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, trans. by Jay Miskowiec (October 1984) p.4

[439] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, trans. by Jay Miskowiec (October 1984) p.9

> randomly distributed, or may be arranged according to single or to multiple classifications[440].

Systemic and organisational, a site does not need to be anchored in the real. In that sense, sites are described as utopias, ancestors of the virtual, because "they are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society[441]". Conversely though, a place must be geographically attested, that is, rooted in the physical world.

The virtual corresponds to a placeless place, though it is not a groundless place. First, it is a place because it is real; because it is "a locale whose form, function, and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity[442]". And though Castells is a bit reluctant towards this formulation, it is somehow *placeless* because delocalized, insofar as the place has been absorbed in the network, in the space of flows "constituted by its nodes and hubs[443]". A such, the reality of virtuality must be acknowledged, instead of being apprehended as a mere illusion.

On that last point, it is interesting to note that, while discussing role-playing games, Turkle mostly viewed virtuality as a digitized extension of the real, while Castells rather thinks virtuality in terms of an interpenetration with the real. This interpenetration with the physical world prevents virtuality to be strictly thought as utopic and therefore, as purely placeless. While discussing the impact of social spaces of virtual reality, Castells takes the example of role-playing game *Second Life* and explains:

> For many observers, the most interesting trend among Second Life communities is their inability to create Utopia, even in the absence of institutional or spatial limitations. Residents of Second Life have reproduced some of the features of our society, including many of its pitfalls, such as aggression and rape. Furthermore, Second Life is privately owned by Linden Corporation, and virtual real estate soon became a profitable business, to the point that the United States Internal Revenue Service started to develop schemes to tax the Linden dollars

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[440] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, trans. by Jay Miskowiec (October 1984) p.2

[441] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, trans. by Jay Miskowiec (October 1984) p.3

[442] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition with a new preface (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell publications, 2010) p.453

[443] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition with a new preface (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell publications, 2010) p.443

> that are convertible to US dollars. Yet, this virtual space has such a communicative capacity that some universities have established campuses in Second Life; there are also experiments to use it as an educational platform; virtual banks open and go bankrupt following the ups and downs of the US markets; political demonstrations and even violent confrontations between leftists and rightists take place in virtual cities; and news stories within Second Life reach the real world through an increasingly attentive corps of media correspondents[444].

As such, virtuality is more a different reality than a non-reality. Castells makes an interesting move in describing the virtual as what is intertwined in the real, and as what has a profundity of its own.

In sum, what Foucault manages to put in place through the joint concept of utopia and heterotopia is the formulation of the mirror as the metaphor of virtuality; a virtuality which is not a no-where, but an else-where. This would mean that cyberspace cannot simply be a non-place. Instead, it is a place that is displaced, or out of place. This is what Castells seems to defend in his study of new media and what Turkle's early investigations did not adequately grasp. The reevaluation of the virtual into the domain of reality is what will constitute my next focus.

4.5 SOCIAL MEDIA: WHAT IS SO REAL ABOUT THE VIRTUAL?

In *The Second Self*, Sherry Turkle argues that "online life can be used as a psychosocial moratorium, that is, as an opportunity to 'play out' new kinds of relationships in a relatively consequence-free context[445]". The message seems clear; the virtual is trivial. Indeed, when Turkle discusses the issue, she immediately takes for object of study role-playing games such as *Second Life* or *The Sim's*, as if virtuality was best expressed through recreational activities. Pointing at the virtual's lack of seriousness is not unique to Turkle's work. Hubert Dreyfus goes down the same path when drawing a continuity between Kierkegaard's account of the Press as encouraging a discursivity of the meaningless, and the emergence of the Web, which inhibits the

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[444] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition with a new preface (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell publications, 2010) p. xxix-xxx

[445] Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: The MIT Press, 2005) p.331

possibility of true commitment. According to him, the virtual is vain and empty. Read from this angle, the Web is risk-free:

> Kierkegaard thought that in the final analysis people were attracted to the Press, and we can now add the Web, because the anonymous spectator *takes no* risks. The person in the aesthetic-sphere keeps open all possibilities and has no fixed identity that could be threatened by disappointment, humiliation or loss. Surfing the Web is ideally suited to such a life. On the Internet commitments are at best virtual commitments and losses only virtual losses[446].

The virtual space opens up a reassuring world where choices and actions that constitute our identities are reversible, effaceable, and/or redoable. Because there is no possibility for the either/or to be enacted, the user being able to jump from an alternative to another, the confrontation of loss which is irreducible to the choice, vanishes.

> Kierkegaard would surely argue that, while the Internet *allows* unconditional commitments, it does not *support* them. Like a simulator, it manages to capture everything but the risk. Our imaginations can be drawn in, as they are in playing games and watching movies. And no doubt game simulations sharpen our responses for non-game situations. But so far as games work by capturing our imaginations, they will fail to give us serious commitments (…) Far from encouraging unconditional commitments, the Net tends to turn all of life into a risk-free game. So, in the end, although Information Technology does not *prohibit* unconditional commitments, it does *inhibit* them[447].

Dreyfus makes the same mistake as Turkle in illustrating virtuality as a game. His example is misleading and reductive because it narrows down the definition of cyberspace to a child's playground. Besides, this lack of risk he describes is a lure, as well as for anonymity. Users can be trackable and identifiable. Thus, despite this impression of invisibility one may experience online, information is hardly erasable, which is one of the reasons the Deep Web emerged, for it offers the possibility of escaping the risk of surveillance. As Manuel Castells argues, virtuality is not a space that grows apart from virtuality. Hence, claiming that virtuality is meaningless or ineffective represents already in itself a risk. Nonetheless, this impression of anonymity and of recreational space remains a common assumption, and it is this

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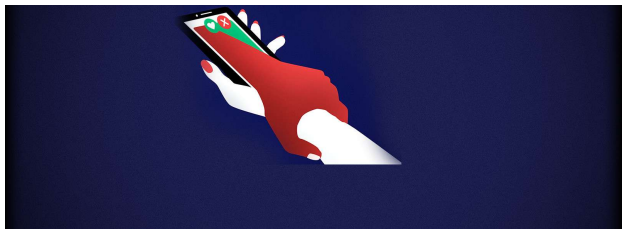
[446] Hubert Dreyfus, 'Anonymity versus Commitment: The Dangers of Education on the Internet', in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*, ed. Robert C. Scharff and Val Dusek (Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014) pp 641-647.

[447] Hubert Dreyfus, 'Anonymity versus Commitment: The Dangers of Education on the Internet', in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*, ed. Robert C. Scharff and Val Dusek (Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014) pp 641-647.

assumption that should be dismantled[448].

As it has been explained above, the virtual is often underestimated for it is associated in the collective unconscious with leisure. It is this impression that French magazine *Le Monde* brings into question in an article dealing with the issue of online-harassment.



The image above served as an illustration for an article dealing with the issue of online dating and the resulting harassment of women. Cyber-harassment, which has been for years a recurring problem on Twitter, is rarely severely punished[449], perhaps because it is ill-conceived, misunderstood or not clearly acknowledged as an offense by the legal system, which is too slow and static to apprehend the internet which stands as its complete opposite. The image here bluntly represents a handshake between virtuality and reality, but the colliding of these two worlds is pictured as violent and intrusive. This feeling of intrusion precisely emerges as a reaction to the widely-shared assumption that whatever one is doing online, these acts will remain *only* virtual, as Dreyfus claims, and so, reasonably safe. The choice of colors is also quite evocative; indeed, the virtual hand appears in red, hence menacing, while its real counterpart is immaculate. The first seems to abruptly jump off the screen to grab and pull the

[448] Galloway will draw on the political implications of this issue. He argues, in this respect, that such recreational illusion provided by the digital has become an important part of what he calls 'ludic capitalism'. He thus warns us that it is no longer the disciplinary that constitutes the core of systems of control, but the very experience of enjoyment.

[449] Matias, J., Johnson, A., Boesel, W. E., Keegan, B., Friedman, J., & DeTar, C., 'Reporting, reviewing, and responding to harassment on Twitter', (2015) Available at *SSRN 2602018*.

second, hereby highlighting the violence of the encounter, as if saying that virtuality *should not* get in touch with reality, though it unfortunately does. In this respect, the image exemplifies well the ludic and yet, dangerous character of virtuality; most users, the image suggests, treat digital technologies as toys, because they believe that the virtual space they offer is completely foreign to reality. It suggests, in other words, that believing in a safe cyberspace is exactly where the virtual's real danger lies.

The novelty brought with the digital era is not that of virtuality, as Sherry Turkle suggests, but that of *real virtuality*. Cyberspace is real because it does not just mirror the physical world, but blends with it. On this issue, Turkle's metaphor of the mirror appears obsolete, because the discursivity deployed by such metaphor gets stuck in an old dialectics whereby the human and the technological, the real and the virtual, can never be fully conciliated and in which the merging of the two is barely conceivable. Castells concludes for his part that "space is not the reflection of society, it is its expression[450]". Hence, Castells comes to term with a concept of virtuality presented as non-reality. And in doing so, he moves away from the recursive logic of the original and the copy.

But to continue the dichotomy between the real and the virtual is to prolong the dichotomy between the tangible and the non-tangible, the proper and the improper. It is to assume that one is more legitimate, true or reliable than the other. In this respect, Turkle's early work on virtuality has underestimated the political impact of virtuality on reality, for she primary approaches virtuality from the angle of triviality.

At this stage, it could be addressed to me that my reading of Turkle is unfair and that claiming that her account of virtuality is obsolete is to already propose an obsolete reading of her work. Turkle's research does not stop with *The Second Self*, which is the main object of my study for this section. If I focus on this text, rather than her more recent research, it is not for the pleasure of pointing out possible flaws in her understanding of new media. *The Second Self* was originally published in 1984 and

[450] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition with a new preface (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell publications, 2010) p.441

the time of its release must be taken into consideration, for if it is outdated, it is because the computational machines and the so-called cyberspaces she is studying are themselves outdated. However, what I find compelling in this book is that it still resonates with certain assumptions regarding the virtual sphere. As I have mentionned at length, these assumptions are that of conceiving the world of internet as risk-free, ludic and trivial. In that sense, Turkle's work on *The Second Self* remains pertinent and still deserves our full attention.

4.6 KEY POINTS

In this chapter, I examined Turkle's insight on machines as mirrors of the mind. In focusing on the psychological effects of computers on individual's personal development, I expressed some reservations towards her account of the machine as the reflection of subjective life because it confines the machine to its role of imitator. Lydia Liu writes on that issue:

> Fundamentally, why should a machine be made to resemble or duplicate a human being? Is narcissism a necessary (psychic) condition for the development of technological prosthesis, as Marshall McLuhan once suggested? Furthermore, does the logic of reciprocity compel human beings to imitate their machines just as much as the machines are built to resemble them, keeping an infinite feedback loop of simulacra or doppelgänger in place? If so, is there a psychic force that drives the feedback loop of human- machine interchange even before the reverse engineering of the human brain becomes possible? Finally, does this feedback loop obey a set of laws once speculated by Freud as the compulsion to repeat, the unconscious, the death drive, and so on?[451]

I aimed to show that technologies were more than just a process of repetition. It is in that sense that I believe Stiegler's views on originary technicity come as useful to apprehend technologies other than as the subordinate of human life, but as what enables human life. I was then comparing Turkle's view on virtuality which she presents as the copy of the real with Castells' own approach. I have shown that Castells prefers to put the emphasis on the expressive character of virtuality. He thus breaks

[451] Lydia H. Liu, *The Freudian Robot: Digital Media and the Future of the Unconscious* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2010) introduction, p.2

down the division between the virtual and the real and tends to present the virtual as real as the real.

Though Castells' approach could be reconciled with Stiegler's in the way he presents technologies as the source of social development, and not its consequence or effect, I do not wish to reduce technologies to their expressive character either, that is, in their capacity to communicate something; to deliver a message. I agree that technologies are the expression of the human, I disagree with the idea that they are *only* that. I argue instead that technologies are more than a communication system, more than an apparatus meant to disclose meaning, more than a conglomerate of signs and symbols. However, the question of meaning is central to Stiegler's philosophy. Indeed, his account of epiphylogenesis presents the tool as bearer of sense insofar as it sediments past experiences. Put otherwise, the tool is the vector of memory, the medium through which knowledge can be transmitted to future generations. It thus means that technical evolution as a whole is closely tied to the production and the diffusion of signification.

In my opinion, Stiegler's work tends to enact a divide between the meaningful and the meaningless. This is rendered evident with the figure of the amateur which he contrasts with that of the consumer. The amateur is an artist because he produces cultural symbols. Conversely, the consumer kills off cultural symbols. The consumer is the one that cannot produce or create. But obviously, it is not enough to be a producer for Stiegler. Our current economy over produces and yet does not allow for meaningful encounter. The saturation of goods and commodities coupled with the liquidation of symbols and values are precisely constitutive of the symbolic misery.

As such, the amateur is more than a producer, he is the producer of the aesthetic experience. This aesthetic experience is that of singularity, diversification and differentiation[452]. It is the exact opposite of the experience proposed by mass-culture industries which instead, are standardizing subjective life. Stiegler writes in this

[452] Martin Crowley, 'The Artist and the Amateur, from Misery to Invention', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Gerald Moore and Christina Howells (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.119-134.

respect:

> An immense part of the population is today deprived of any aesthetic *experience*, entirely subjected as it is to the aesthetic *conditioning* in which marketing consists, which has become hegemonic for the vast majority of the world's population – while the other part of the population, which still has such experiences [qui expérimente encore], has resigned itself to losing those who have sunk into this conditioning[453].

It has thus become necessary to articulate the transition from the age of the consumer to the age of the amateurs "who *love* because, in their own way, by forms of practice which cannot be reduced to habit, they too *open out* and, in so doing, are opened[454]". Indeed, it is only in developing the figure of the amateur, argues Stiegler, that one can grow a sense of intellectual existence.

[453] Stiegler, as quoted and translated by Martin Crowley, 'The Artist and the Amateur, from Misery to Invention', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Gerald Moore and Christina Howells (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.120
The quote can be found in a slightly different translation in Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Cambridge: Polity, 2014) p.3

[454] Stiegler, as quoted and translated by Martin Crowley, 'The Artist and the Amateur, from Misery to Invention', in *Stiegler and Technics*, eds. Gerald Moore and Christina Howells (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.132
The quote can be found in a slightly different translation in Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery: The Katastrophé of the Sensible*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Cambridge: Polity, 2015) p.13

V- ALEXANDER GALLOWAY: EXCOMMUNICATION, NETWORKS AND PROTOCOL

"The founding principle of the Net is control, not freedom. Control has existed from the beginning. Perhaps it is a different type of control than we are used to seeing. It is a type of control based on openness, inclusion, universalism, and flexibility".
Alexander Galloway[455].

The purpose of this chapter will be to challenge Stiegler's account of technology as the vector of meaning to argue instead that technology does also resist and/or escape meaning.

Stiegler defines technics as "pursuit of life by means other than life"[456] and thus stresses technics as the diffusion or order and stability. Indeed, technics is negentropic for it enables human beings to survive in their environment. Tools and artefacts, Stiegler says, provide humans with the means to resist or compensate for biological decay. However, technics does not simply organize matter, it organizes thought in general. To express his point, Stiegler proposes to go back to Plato.

Stiegler argues that philosophy begins by repressing its own question[457], for it has disavowed technics from the outset. As he explains, the origin of knowledge constitutes the philosophical question *par excellence*: how is it possible for us to know? Plato, who for Stiegler stands at the origin of philosophy itself, famously locates the possibility of knowledge in *anamesis*, that is, in the recollection process. In *Meno*, Plato illustrates his theory in engaging a dialogue between Socrates and a slave. Socrates asks the slave to perform a geometrical reasoning, despite the slave's ignorance of geometry. After going through a series of deductions, the slave solves the problem without Socrates teaching him. For Plato, this example serves to demonstrate

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[455] *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*, Alexander R. Galloway (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England; The MIT Press, 2004) p.141-2
[456] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.17
[457] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, eds and trans. by Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.31

that knowledge is never acquired but recovered. It thus stands as an already-there. But Stiegler points out that in order to conduct their reasoning, Socrates and the slave had to trace figures on the sand, hence having, by this very gesture, recourse to technics. Knowledge, Stiegler claims, stems from the internalisation process of the exterior. In this respect, the origin of knowledge does not lie in the inside of *anamesis*, but in the outside of *hypomnesis*. It means also that knowledge is formed, rather than simply remembered. Hence, Stiegler emphasizes technics as a rational process and declares:

> To think his object, right away he needs to externalise this object by organising the sand, by organising the inorgacity of the sand, which then becomes the space and the medium of projection of the geometrical concept — the sand is here a plastic surface that can receive and, more importantly, retain an inscription. No matter how short-lived it is, the drawing on the sand can preserve a character of an element of the figure longer than the spirit of the slave, since the spirit of the slave is by essence changing (…) This drawing constitutes what I have called elsewhere a crutch of the understanding, and a space of intuition that is entirely produces by the gestures of the slave who traces in the sand, throughout his reasoning, the sand preserving them as the results that the slave, together with his intuition and his understanding, has 'under sight' and upon which he can extend and construct geometrical reasoning[458].

In this respect, Stiegler's conception of technics is techno-logical, because *logos* is intrinsic to the technical gesture. This leads Stiegler to describe technics as the condition for all possibility of thought. Indeed, the second volume of *Technics and Time* argues that in virtue of its capacities to order the real, the technical object temporalizes, spatializes, configures and concretizes[459]. Put more broadly, technics is what *enables* and *orients* thought. For these reasons, Stiegler is to me less a thinker of technics (*qua poiesis*[460]) than a thinker of the *techno-logical*.

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[458] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosophising by Accident: Interviews with Élie During*, eds and trans. by Benoît Dillet (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p.52

[459] By "concretization", Stiegler understands the "tendential path toward perfection". Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p.54

[460] Stiegler's account of technics privileges the linearity of *tekhne* over the swirling, though disorienting movement of *poiesis*. Yet, he acknowledges to some extent the poietic dimension of technics. Insofar as technics transforms matter, it is right to characterizes *tekhne* as *poetic*, Stiegler says, for it does produce something; it produces the different. However, when recounting the story of Prometheus and Epimetheus through the mouth of Protagoras, it is interesting to note that Stiegler reverses the ascendency of *poiesis* (skill in the arts) on *tekhne* (fire); "for without fire there was no means *[amekhanon]* for anyone to possess or use this skill". It is not that Stiegler simply negates *poiesis*, but it is evident that his account of the *poietic* is outshined by the aesthetic necessity of order, proper to *tekhne*.

I would like, for this chapter, to challenge this techno-logical account by offering a contrast with the work of Alexander Galloway. Galloway is critical regarding the theorization of (new) media as transparent tools of communication, and more broadly, of the conflation between the medium and the message. Such understanding, he claims, reduces media to its faculty to increase or impoverish meaning. I will thus state that Galloway's understanding of excommunication is opening a third road to Stiegler's binary conception of the aesthetical order. Indeed, Galloway's work on excommunication shows that media can defy the coherent circuits of the communicable to propose instead an aesthetics of the unworkable, that is, the inoperable and the unproductive.

Galloway argues overall that media shall not simply be thought from the angle of meaning. For him, it is not a matter of what they are, but about what they do, do not do and fail to do. In this regard, media should rather be defined by their 'effects'. I will thus contrast Galloway's understanding of the effect with Stiegler's theory of the affect. The conclusion I would like to draw from this investigation is that by being so keen to tackle media through the angle of communication and signification, Stiegler does not allow technology to be absurd, futile and/ or distracting. He thus underestimates the positive aesthetic value of the meaningless for human existence. Yet, I suggest that Galloway's emphasis on the effect, instead of freeing technology from meaning, does unfortunately throw it into the hands of control. I will then emphasize the influence of Foucault in Galloway's understanding of the network and the protocol. His reading of Foucault, I suggest, leads him to give too much power to control in current networks. In this respect, Galloway may participate despite himself to the spread of the paranoia of control pinpointed by Chun, which is the belief that current networks act as a giant panopticon. I will tackle this last issue in further details in chapter 6.

5.1 MODES OF (EX)COMMUNICATION: HERMES AND IRIS

In the introduction of *Excommunication; Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*[461], Alexander Galloway, Eugene Thacker and McKenzie Wark ask themselves: what is *new* about new media? The aim of their collective work is to deconstruct popular assumptions in the field of media theory. This starts, to them, with the questioning of their so-called novelty. For the trio, not much is very new about new media for they already incorporate in their system and design, past forms of mediation. This means that new media stand in the continuity of old media. But then, what *is* a media? Independently from their supposed novelty, Galloway, Thacker and Wark suggest that "media are transformative" insofar as they affect "conditions of possibility in general[462]". It means that media enable circuits of communication, but are not reducible to communication devices. Elaborating further on that issue, Galloway, Thacker and Wark argue:

> The field of media studies today generally understands media along two interconnected axes: *devices* and *determinacy*. On the one hand, media are understood as synonymous with media devices, technological apparatuses of mediation such as the phone, the file, or the printing press. And yet such technological devices are imbued with the irresistible force of their own determinacy. Media either determine a given social, cultural, or political dimension, or media are themselves determined by the social, cultural, or political. Media makers affect media consumers and thus establish hierarchical relationships with them, or media-savvy individuals express their own desires by way of the tools and machines that extend their will. For media studies generally, media are, in short, determinative devices, and they are thus evaluated normatively as either good influencers or bad influencers[463].

Media, they suggest, shall somehow be thought in terms of modern signifier-gods because, as the mythological figure of Hermes, the deity of the road, travelling and goods-exchange, they enable the circulation of messages. However, in conflating the

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[461] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014)

[462] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.1

[463] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.7

messenger with the message, we take the risk of restricting our understanding of media to their contents.

How do we then avoid the reductive evaluation of media between good and bad influencers? More generally, how can we escape the understanding of technology beyond its curative or poisonous effects?

The main problem for Thacker, Galloway and Wark seems to be the overemphasis put on communication, that is, on media as mere techniques of mediation. It is not that they reject the current understanding of media as communication and as mediation, but rather that they consider it insufficient to fully apprehend the complexity of media. For example, to think media as mediation is misleading insofar as it implies a bi-directional model of communication; a model of communication which connects a sender to a receiver. It implies also that all messages are communicable, the same way it subordinates the communicable to "the presented and the represented", "the mediated and the remediated", and as such, the "communicated and the translated[464]". In other words, it is to understand language as presence and reciprocity. Read from this angle, language and communication are reduced to their message/meaning; it is what it says. Yet, communication is more than what it says, the trio argues. As such, a message does not solely articulate itself around the said, but also to the unsaid. This is what Thacker, Galloway and Wark wish to posit as *excommunication*.

Excommunication shall not be read as the negation of communication, but as its extension; its surplus. As such, the concept of excommunication aims to englobe the said and the unsaid together; it is communication taken to its paradox, that is, its impossibility to communicate.

> We know that the fact that one can communicate doesn't necessarily mean that there is something to say, but at the same time one cannot help notice in our media cultures the seduction of empty messages, flitting here and there like so many angelic constellations in the aether. Do we not always assume that communication is possible and even desirable—or better, do not our attitudes toward communication always presume the possibility of communication, that "there will have always been communication," even before a single word has been uttered?

[464] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.10

> A common language, a common ground, an agreed-upon topic and rules of engagement . . . so much has al- ready taken place prior to the first words being uttered or the first message being sent. There are mediative situations in which heresy, exile, or banishment carry the day, not repetition, communion, or integration. There are certain kinds of messages that state *there will be no more messages*. Why? The reasons may vary, from the paradoxical lyricism of the ineffable ("it can't be put into words"), to the refusal to engage ("I prefer not to"), to the contentiousness of apathy ("some things aren't worth saying"), to the enigma of silence (and its impossibility)[465].

Communication, suggest Thacker, Galloway and Wark, does have an elusive side, an absurd character which is that of excommunication. Their example of the message stating "there will be no more message" illustrates perfectly the absurdity I am trying to pinpoint. It is not absurd because it is stupid, it is absurd, because it defies sense in contradicting and not contradicting itself at the same time. In my view, excommunication is the absurd of communication, insofar as it plays around with the normative circuits of signification and stands at the border between the meaningless and the meaningful, without having to be one or the other. Excommunication, as such, challenges common binary systems of communication. Overall, Thacker's, Galloway's and Wark's book on *Excommunication* explores the limits of communication. They aim to take a critical distance with the old-fashioned, and yet still dominant, view of the modern communicational apparatus as the intertwinement between sender and receiver, message and channel.

To better express my point, I am going to focus now on Galloway's chapter "Love of the Middle" and compare his reading of the figure of Hermes with Stiegler's. As I said, Stiegler mostly understands technology through its role of signifier, hence problematizing technology as either a good or bad influencer; a point which the book on *Excommunication* is openly critical about, though it is not mentioning Stiegler directly. To challenge Stiegler's views will give me the opportunity to pledge for an account of technology beyond communication and beyond signification, that is, beyond its discursive and rational function. My point is to claim and defend a certain opacity and unpredictability of technology. On the contrary, asserting technology as a mere influencer, which in Stiegler's language could be translated as the *pharmakon*,

[465] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.10

equally capable of curating or poisoning, is to conflate the technological with the instrumental. For Latour, such association inevitably confronts us to an unfruitful debate in which we are so prompt to give intentions to technology or to humans:

> Behind the tired repetition of the theme of the neutrality of 'technologies-that-are-neither-good-nor-bad-but-will-be- what-man-makes-of-them', or the theme, identical in its foundation, of 'technology-that-becomes-crazy-because-it-has-become-autonomous-and-no-longer-has-any-other-end-except-it-goalless-development', hides the fear of discovering this reality so new to modern man who has acquired the habit to dominate: there are *no masters anymore* – not even crazed technologies[466].

In claiming that there are no more masters anymore, the same way there are no crazed technologies, Latour emphasizes in its own way the absurd character of technologies by freeing them from the discursivity of mastery, rationality and directionality. What if, after all, technology was taking us nowhere? For Latour, technology escapes the field of rationality; "If you want to keep your intentions straight, your plans inflexible, your programmes of action rigid, then do not pass through any form of technological life[467]". This means that technology never simply translates, supports or achieves our intentions, it constantly betrays them. As such, technology belongs less to "the clarity of right reason[468]", than the opacity of the detour.

In Galloway's own words, Hermes embodies communication because he "governs the sending of messages and the journeying into foreign lands"[469]. As such, the main role of Hermes is to guide and inform the traveller. On that above characterization, Galloway and Stiegler seem to agree. The first point of divergence occurs when Stiegler emphasizes Hermes as the god of translation and textual interpretation, that is, of knowledge circulation. Indeed, Hermes is a signifier-god because he is the inventor of writing. Stiegler tells us that in the Protagorean version of the myth of Prometheus, the figure of Hermes descends from Prometheus himself.

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[466] Bruno Latour, 'Morality and Technology: The End of the Means', *Theory, Culture & Society*, trans. by Couze Venn, vol. 19, 5/6 (2002) 247–260 p.255
[467] Bruno Latour, 'Morality and Technology: The End of the Means', *Theory, Culture & Society*, trans. by Couze Venn, vol. 19, 5/6 (2002) 247–260 p.252
[468] Bruno Latour, 'Morality and Technology: The End of the Means', *Theory, Culture & Society*, trans. by Couze Venn, vol. 19, 5/6 (2002) 247–260 p.251
[469] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.29

In other words, Hermes descends from prostheticity, and therefore technicity. In bringing to light the technical background of the figure of Hermes, Stiegler aims to intertwine technicity and signification together, as he is eager to defend a rational model of technics. Although Stiegler's reading of the figure of Hermes as the symbol of clear communication is not rejected by Galloway who also notes strong acquaintances between Hermes and technics, it is however not fully embraced. The reason for this is that Hermes "does not have the last word on communication *tout court*"[470].

Galloway thus turns to the lesser known figure of Iris. Unlike Hermes, the figure of Iris brings "the communicants into an ecstasy of immediacy, producing a short circuit of hypercommunication"[471]. Iris challenges the traditional circuits of communication that simply include a single message for a single sender and a single receiver. To be more precise, Iris embodies a form of communication, which is in fact an excommunication, that aims at the deceptive, the immediate and the multiple. Although communication can be obscure and iridescent, Hermes himself comes as quite deceptive as the messenger-god of gods. And this is what Stiegler's reading, in my view, does not take into consideration enough. For Galloway, one must bear in mind that Hermes is known for his repeated trickeries. The duplicity of Hermes should not come as a surprise as he is after all the god of borderlands; he lies, robs, manipulates and betrays.

> Hermes is not just a thief, he is the Prince of Thieves. Duplicity in speech gives Hermes yet another epithet, this one explicitly linguistic and semiotic in nature: Hermes *logios*, or as one might say using current parlance the "discursive" Hermes. He governs over eloquence, persuasion, and the act of speaking. Flows of words are not unlike flows of goods and services across the borderlands, and so, as with merchants and economic commerce, Hermes too has a special connection to the dialogical and discursive economies of language that flow from the tongue of the rhetorician. And like Eros and Aphrodite, he is one of the "whisperer" or seducer gods, for he can intoxicate and seduce others either with promise of profit, or seduce simply through the sweet sounds of the lyre or the reed flute. The Hermes *logios* sculptural type depicts the god in the act of oration, for the herald is the one who, after arriving in far-off lands, must stand tall and speak clearly and convincingly. Thus travel and rhetoric—if not its more degraded form, sophistry— are connected in Hermes[472].

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[470] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.30

[471] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.30

[472] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.35

The reason I wanted to briefly focus on Stiegler's and Galloway's respective reading of the Hermes figure in connection to technicity was to show a simple thing, which I think is significant of their approach of media technology; for Stiegler technology belongs to the light of reason[473] whereas for Galloway, technology is opaque and devious. But it is not enough for Galloway to simply branch out media between a hermeneutic or iridescent circuit of communication. He thus jumps to a third type of mediation and has once again recourse to a mythological avatar which is that of the Furies.

5.2 FROM FURIOUS MEDIA TO THE INTERFACE EFFECT

In this section, I intend to show how, according to Galloway, 'furious media' turn meaning into an effect. The Furies, Galloway suggests, characterize the mode of mediation of current digital networks. In this respect, Galloway writes:

> Dispersed. Split. Deconstructed. Fragmented. Disseminated. Scattered. Emulsified. Blunted. Unfolded. Folded up. Incomplete. Becalmed. Calmly. Carefully. Continuously. Obstinately." The Furies signal noncompliance with both immanence and hermeneutics, an abdication of both presence and difference. They signal the triumph of multiplicity, heterogeneity, parallelity, rhizomatics, horizontal topology, complexity, and nonlinear systems. The Furies are essentially indeterminate in number; in the literary record their numbers change depending on the source. If Hermes is the god of the signifier, and Iris is the goddess of immanence, the Furies are the gods of the incontinence of form[474].

Furious media are a succession of causalities and micro functions[475]. Meaning is discretized, shattered into a multiplicity of autonomous points, nodes and ties. This last statement summarizes well, I believe, his theory of the effect which I propose now

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[473] In the second volume of *Technics and Time*, Stiegler does indeed examines the orthothetic substructure of technical life insofar as technics is an orientation marker. It is orthothetic because it indicates, designates, rectifies and corrects.

[474] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.57

[475] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.62

to investigate. This will be done by analyzing what he problematizes as the 'interface effect' and by assessing what the term 'effect' conveys.

Galloway reminds us that "an interface is not something that appears before you but rather is a gateway that opens up and allows passage to some place beyond[476]". In this respect, technologies not only posit themselves as designing processes, but shall also be apprehended as surfaces, or zones of activities. This is precisely what the notion of interface wishes to bring forth. Having said that, the interface should not be thought as the medium itself, but as the principle of mediation. Galloway thus argues that the interface is not a static object, but a plastic phenomenon that configures and reconfigures our semiotic and aesthetic experience with technologies:

> Interfaces are not things, but rather processes that effect a result of whatever kind. For this reason I will be speaking not so much about particular interface objects (screens, keyboards), but *interface effects*. And in speaking about them I will not be satisfied just to say an interface is defined in such and such a way, but to show how it exists that way for specific social and historical reasons. Interfaces themselves are effects, in that they bring about transformations in material states. But at the same time interfaces are themselves the effects of other things, and thus tell the story of the larger forces that engender them[477].

The interface is more than a platform, a substrate, or a hypomnemata. It stands as a practice of mediation. In choosing to describe the interface as an *effect* and not as a *thing*[478], Galloway is in fact suggesting that the interface is inscribed in a network. This means that the interface is mediatic. The very notion of interface is set in the constant dynamic of relations. It means that it takes part to the whole circuit of causes and effects, that is, the relation of objects to objects.

Galloway's research mainly concentrate on rhizomes, nodes, structures and principles of mediation. *The Interface Effect* is not a book on media properly speaking,

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[476] Alexander R. Galloway, *The interface effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p.30
[477] Alexander R. Galloway, *The interface effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p.vii
[478] In a Heideggerian sense, the thing is an ontological category: "Less a tool or object of knowledge, the thing is for Heidegger that intersection or congealment of materials, production processes, and ideologies" Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.114

but on what stands in-between, that is to say, the activity of (non)-transmission. To clarify the distinction between media and interface, one needs to keep in mind that the media is a container, whereas the interface is understood as an agitation, for it is generative of "frictions between different formats.[479]" Galloway criticizes Kittler for adopting a media-centric discourse, insofar as the latter apprehends media primarily in terms of material support *capable of* storing, processing and transmitting. Galloway claims that endorsing such a view only contributes to repeating and reinforcing the prejudice done to the field of technology since Plato;

> By conservative I mean the claim that *techne* is substrate and only substrate. For Kittler and McLuhan alike, media mean hypomnesis. They define media via the externalization of man into objects. Hence a fundamentally conservative dichotomy is inaugurated – which to be clear was in Plato before it was in Aristotle – between the good and balanced human specimen and the dead junk of the hypomnemata. Contrast this with an alternate philosophical tradition that views *techne* as technique, art, habitus, ethos, or lived practice. Such an alternate tradition is what was alluded to previously, through the contrast between media (as objects or substrates) and practices of mediation (as middles or interfaces). Indeed it is ironic that Kittler hews so closely to Heidegger, as Heidegger was one of the philosophers who best understood both aspects of *techne*.[480]

The problem lies in the definition itself, for in choosing to define technology as mere hypomnemata, one is doing nothing else than continuing the discursive dichotomy between the human and technology in which the latter is condemned to live in the shadow of the former. Technology is not a mere support for subjective life, that is, of human activity, Galloway argues. In this respect, he suggests that media should not be defined by their essence as hypomnemata, but shall rather be understood in terms of their effects. Hence, one should not ask "what is it?" but instead "what does it do?". Put otherwise, one should apprehend media in terms of its capacities, potentialities and possibilities.

In sum, media are modes of mediation[481] that can only be apprehended in virtue of their effects. It will be the task of the following paragraph to explain in what the effect consists.

First of all, the effect is not subjective, but objective. To illustrate his point, Galloway argues for example we do not cry at websites like we cry at the movies. The

[479] Alexander R. Galloway, *The interface effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p.31
[480] Alexander R. Galloway, *The interface effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p.16
[481] Alexander R. Galloway, *The interface effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p.18

emotional/ aesthetic experience they offer is not comparable. This stance articulates the whole problematic between the effect and the affect; cinema affects me, Galloway says, whereas the interface has an effect on me. As a spectator, I can concentrate on a movie, and be emotionally invested, because I maintain a necessary distance that enables me to reflect on the object. In the case of digital technologies, their immediacy absorbs my attention, rendering it impossible for me to concentrate, or to reflect on them. There is no entertainment, only unproductive distraction. The whole problem of furious media lies precisely in the absence of affect, for they do not enable emotional appropriation. Instead, new media encourage emotional *reaction*.

Galloway's criticisms resonate in many ways with Stiegler's. As mentionned in chapter 3, Stiegler's own work on attention formation warns us about the power of visual technologies. In the third tome of *Technics and Time*, he describes their seductive character on consciousness as below:

> The cinematic will attract our attention to the passing images, no matter what they are, and we will prefer to see them unfold before our eyes. We become immersed in the time of their flowing forth; we forget all about ourselves watching, perhaps "losing ourselves" (losing track of time), but however we define it, we will be sufficiently captured, not to say captivated, to stay with it to the very end. During the passing ninety minutes or so (fifty-two in the case of tele-visual "hour") of this pastime, the time of our consciousness will be totally passive within the thrall of those "moving" images that are linked together by noises, sounds, words, voices. Ninety or fifty-two minutes of our life will have passed by outside our "real" life, but within a life or the lives of people and events, real or fictive, to which we will have conjoined our time, adopting their events as though they were happening to us as they happened to them[482].

As mentionned earlier, Stiegler draws on Husserl and states that attention is formed and sedimented through one's capacity to focus on an object. Put briefly, the sedimentation of attention contributes to the formation of intelligence. Attention constitutes therefore the core of intellectual existence while culture, according to Stiegler, is the sum of the intergenerational transmission of attentional forms. These attentional forms, Stiegler argues, are individually produced before becoming collectively appropriated. Cultural life is, in this respect, the result of an intergenerational psycho-collective process of memorization which however always

[482] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, trans. Stephen Barker, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.10

depends on the exteriorization of attention in technical objects[483].

While technology allows for the crystallization of attentional forms, it also redesigns them. Hence, Stiegler draws a line between noo-technologies and psychotechnologies. As technologies of spirit, the former generates deep attention, whereas the latter, as technologies of feelings and emotions, generates hyper-attention. Deep attention belongs to the rational, hyper-attention, to the pathological; that is to say, to the affect. Drawing on the work of Katharine Hayles, Stiegler describes hyper-attention as the symptom of a generational malaise which is encouraged by certain types of digital technologies or interfaces. Social networks such as Facebook are an example of that because these platforms, according to Stiegler, are designed to privilege multitasking, that is, a series of short actions with immediate repercussions. It produces "a form of attention without consciousness, a characteristic of wild animals"[484]. Following Freud on this, Stiegler defines the affect in terms of drives. Profoundly unpoetic and unaesthetic; drives are the manifestation of a morbid relationship towards the object [485]. Drives are opposed to desires, for Stiegler. They are lived and cannot be appropriated or reflected upon. On this, Stiegler is close to Freud, as he warns us that despite being enjoyable — which constitutes their danger — drives do not represent an alternative for desire, but are symptomatic of the failure to desire.

In my opinion, Galloway's work rather opposes effect and affect, the objective and the subjective. Having said that, the main point of divergence seems to be the following: Stiegler claims that technologies do affect us, while Galloway pretends that

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[483] Bernard Stiegler, 'Relational Ecology and the Digital Pharmakon', trans. Patrick Crogan. *Culture Machine*, 2012. Issue 13: 1–19. p.4

[484] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations,* trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010),p.78

[485] Freud writes:
"If the love for the object—a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up—takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering. The self-tormenting in melancholia, which is without doubt enjoyable, signifies, just like the corresponding phenomenon in obsessional neurosis, a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been turned round upon the subject's own self" see: Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (1917) p.250

they do not, precisely because he understands the affect as already poietic, the pathos, as being already the sign of spirit. In this respect, the apparent reign of the affect in the digital sphere is only an illusion:

> The net is nothing if not the grand parade of personality profiles, wants and needs, projected egos, "second" selves and "second" lives. This is all true. So the triumph of affect is also its undoing. The waning of an older affective mode comes at the moment of its absolute rationalization into software. At the moment when something is perfected, it is dead. This is the condition of affect today online, and it is why the object of the computer is not a man: because its data is one. [486]

According to Galloway, the affect suffers from the process of rationalization. It is because of its algorithmatization, mathematization, and discretization, that the affect is condemned to be transformed into an effect, that is, into a quantified phenomenon. The effect belongs to the objective. It is a succession, or an intertwinement, of causalities, while the affect's mode of functioning is more obscure, and cannot solely be explained through the accumulation of empirical data and the analytic logic of causation. Its spiritual, poietic, dimension is precisely what cannot be calculated or grasped. The affect, argues Galloway, has no place in the digital world, because it is human. The digital sphere, as he has explained, only supports relations of objects to objects. This means that what characterizes the interface is the absence of the subject. Instead, there are users, profiles or persona. In other words, more numbers, more statistics.

Whether hypnotic or distracting, screens do not leave us indifferent. For Stiegler, new media liquidate the possibility of the aesthetical experience. Galloway, on the other hand, states that the interface effect constitutes the very aesthetical dimension of the digital. To better understand Stiegler's binary position on aesthetics, I am going to contrast his views with Benjamin's by the means of a story.

5.3 STIEGLER AND BENJAMIN WALK INTO A CINEMA

[486] Alexander R. Galloway, *The interface effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p.12

Let's imagine for a moment that Bernard Stiegler and Walter Benjamin live on the same timeframe and that they decide to go to the cinema together. Though Benjamin does not need much convincing, valuing cinema for rendering culture available to the masses and freeing the artwork from the grip of bourgeoisie, Stiegler is hopeful that the movie will transcend their existence. He tells Benjamin:

> If by some lucky chance the film is a good one, we who are watching it in complete lethargy, the core validation of the animated sound-image by which we can leave everything behind and still be completely uninvolved— not even (as with a book) following written sentences and turning pages, careful not to lose the gist of the story; indeed, if the film is good, we come out of it less lazy, even re-invigorated, full of emotion and the desire to do something, or else infused with a new outlook on things: the cinematographic machine, taking charge of our boredom, will have transformed it into new energy, transubstantiated it, made something out of nothing — the nothing of that terrible, nearly fatal feeling of a Sunday afternoon of nothingness. The cinema will have brought back the expectation of something, something that must come, that will come, and that will come to us from our own life; from this seemingly non-fictional life that we re-discover when, leaving the darkening room, we hide ourselves in the fading light of day.[487]

Let's now imagine that they watch *Iron Man*. Indeed, Stiegler thought it was a good idea as it will perhaps enable him to introduce Benjamin to his theory regarding the co-evolution of the human and the technical. Two hours later, they both leave the screening and agree that the movie was distracting. Yet, they do not feel the same way about it. Benjamin, for his part, is quite satisfied, arguing that:

> If one considers the dangerous tensions which technology and its consequences have engendered in the masses at large-tendencies which at critical stages take on a psychotic character-one also has to recognize that this same technologization [*Technisierung*] has created the possibility of psychic immunization against such mass psychoses. It does so by means of certain films in which the forced development of sadistic fantasies or masochistic delusions can prevent their natural and dangerous maturation in the masses. Collective laughter is one such preemptive and healing outbreak of mass psychosis. The countless grotesque events consumed in films are a graphic indication of the dangers threatening mankind from the repressions implicit in civilization. American slapstick comedies and Disney films trigger a therapeutic release of unconscious energies[488].

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[487] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, trans. Stephen Barker, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p.10

[488] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, and Others (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" second version. p.38

But Stiegler remains puzzled, pointing out that the movie, like most of Hollywood blockbusters, is finally a bit dumb. And also dangerous. Unlike Benjamin, Stiegler does not see how the movie can immunize the masses from their worst impulses. It does in fact the opposite! He thus replies to Benjamin:

> The goal is the stimulation of immature drives, making them prescriptive for adults as well by inverting intergenerational relations, the result of which is organized mass regression, cultural minoritization, and (even through legislation, now) the imposing of premature maturation[489].

It occurs overall that Stiegler and Benjamin disagree on the value of entertainment, which Benjamin chooses to take as a positive distraction. As such, Benjamin values the movie for its cathartic virtues, when Stiegler attacks the movie for encouraging psychic regression. In the case of *Iron Man*, Stiegler would for example argue, in conformity to his philosophy that it is spreading American values, glorifying capitalism, and short-circuiting attention by presenting too many action scenes. It is indeed entertaining, but it is entertaining insofar as the movie captures its audience "through the most archaic drives, then compelling it to construct a consciousness reduced to simple, reflex cerebral functions, which is always disenchanted and always available[490]". Stiegler thus opposes entertainment and fantasy[491]. He claims that entertainment destroys our ability to fantasize, as it captures our imagination and

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[489] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.12

[490] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.15

[491] For Stiegler fantasy is essential to the aesthetic experience:

"Fantasy, created through *phantasia* (i.e., through the imagination's formation of symbolic mediations), is humanity's most precious gift: it en- genders the very spirit of human culture, including science, since as Bachelard shows, science results from imaginative play in the specific form of attention we call *contemplation (theoria),* which then results in a mode of *observation* in which pleasure and reality seem to coincide: the reality principle does not oppose the pleasure principle here, but rather is its product".

Entertainment, on the other hand, is fantasy constrained, insofar as it has been captured by "*uncontrolled* cultural industrialization" which "activates the psychopower of attentional control".

Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p.15

standardizes our dreams. Besides, in being too keen to contrast distraction with concentration through the model of deep and hyper-attention I have discussed in the section above, Stiegler does not seem to be willing to make a difference between positive and negative distraction, as if distraction was always debilitating. Having listened to Stiegler's ranting, Benjamin would like to bring some nuance to the approach:

> The masses are criticized for seeking distraction *[Zerstreuung]* in the work of art, whereas the art lover supposedly approaches it with concentration. In the case of the masses, the artwork is seen as a means of entertainment; in the case of the art lover, it is considered an object of devotion[492].

My point is not to merely say that Benjamin would defend the Hollywood blockbuster, as his investigations on the aesthetics of experience does in fact polarize the reception of an artwork between positive and negative distraction[493]. Yet, the problem is not located in the distracting character of the object, but its subjective reception. As it is not the place to elaborate on subject-object division in theories of the aesthetic judgement, I will limit my understanding of Benjamin as follows: movies mobilize the masses and allow for a reception in distraction in virtue of their shock effect. Yet, this distraction is not necessarily bad and if it is destructive, it may perhaps be for the best. Unlike Stiegler, Benjamin does not fear the dissolution of traditions. Benjamin is actually positive regarding the massive reproduction of art, even though it contributes

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[492] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, and Others (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" second version. p.39

[493] This concerns more architecture than cinema, but is still worth of interest. In his essay "some motifs on Baudelaire" Benjamin argues for example that the urban crowd "has been sealed off" from experience, constantly distracted by external stimuli. So far, this would sound Stieglerian. Yet, his later essay on "The Work of Art in its Mechanical Reproduction/Technological Reproducibility", which I have here chosen for focus, depicts the urban life in a more positive way. Benjamin suggests indeed that it is possible for the masses to be confronted with the experience of *everydayness*. Urban architecture, to him, illustrates well this aesthetic of everydayness in which masses "casually notice" the presence of buildings and absorb these buildings "into themselves". By contrast, the individual who sees an artwork is absorbed by it, insofar as the work of art, when directed to the individual and not the masses, demands attentive concentration. The experience of the building (excluding touristy monuments) would be by use and perception, sight and touch. It stands there for collective consumption and yet, this is not incompatible with a certain level of aesthetic appropriation. What Benjamin is getting at is that aesthetic experience does not have to be solely contemplative; the contemplative gaze is just *one way* to experience the world. Another way, suggests Benjamin, would be by habit.
See: Alan Latham. "The Power of Distraction: Distraction, Tactility, and Habit in the Work of Walter Benjamin." in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 17, no. 4 (1999): 451-73.

to the decline of the artwork's aura, as there is sometimes a gain to be found from a loss.

In this story, Walter Benjamin is happy with *Iron Man* not only because the movie is cathartic, but also because in being intended for the masses it promotes the dissemination of culture. In this respect, the movie is an example of a successful politicization of art. Stiegler may think the movie has good ideas regarding technology, but remains an instrument of psychopower insofar as it has been designed to support American imperialism. While Benjamin understands *Iron Man* as an artwork, Stiegler views it as a weapon, and therefore, as a falsely cultural object contributing to the aesthecization of politics, and in this case of war. Though a lot could be said about politics of entertainment, this does not unfortunately constitute the core of my topic.

I would like therefore to conclude this part with the following observation: Benjamin's insight on positive distraction defends the futile as aesthetically and existentially worthy. In its meaninglessness and triviality, distraction can be intellectually productive. Stiegler, on the other hand, opposes distraction with concentration. Distraction is for him destructive because of its immediate character. Concentration is conversely productive because it "holds the object in a firm contemplative gaze"[494] and a distancing look, that are, according to him, essential to the true, deep, aesthetic experience. In this regard, Stiegler devalues the meaningless and the trivial as a positive mode of aesthetic experience, as if both were condemned to be the negation of experience.

5.4 THE HIGHWAY ANALOGY

[494] Alan Latham. "The Power of Distraction: Distraction, Tactility, and Habit in the Work of Walter Benjamin." in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 17, no. 4 (1999): 451-73.

Galloway, on the other hand, seems to assign an aesthetic value to the meaninglessness of the effect. As such, I would like for this paragraph to discuss his famous analogy of freedom with the highway, which shows how the aesthetic experience of freedom has itself been turned into a network effect. By the means of this analogy, Galloway also wants to stress how the aesthetic experience has become dependent to the notion of the ludic, insofar as it is enjoyment that is constitutive of the meaningful experience of freedom here. He thus writes:

> To help understand the concept of computer protocols, consider the analogy of the highway system. Many different combinations of roads are available to a person driving from point A to point B. However, en route one is compelled to stop at red lights, stay between the white lines, follow a reasonably direct path, and so on. These conventional rules that govern the set of possible behavior patterns within a heterogeneous system are what computer scientists call protocol. Thus, protocol is a technique for achieving voluntary regulation within a contingent environment[495].

By the means of this metaphor, Galloway shows three things:

1) Freedom is the effect of a network.
2) The network is governed by protocol
3) Freedom is the product of protocol, that is, of control

This means, overall, that one is free when entrapped. Galloway then states that the key to freedom is its architecture. This means that freedom is enacted through limitations, interferences and obstructions insofar as the purpose of freedom is to ensure safety. Galloway constructs in this respect a model of positive liberty in which one's actions are determined by the presence of rules, that is, a certain architecture which is mapping out one's behavior. In this context freedom is neither infinite nor absolute for one's decisions are already coerced by the external environment.

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[495] Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2004) p.7

On one hand, the implementation of highways contributes to the enlargement and the democratization of freedom as it covers long distance and gives the possibility for individuals from all sorts of social background to travel more easily. On the other hand, the highway analogy teaches us that the experience of freedom necessitates rigidity for it can only be enacted and experienced through the setting of patterns such as the introduction of speed limitation or left-hand/right-hand traffic.

This dispositif of control may be an example of soft power in the sense that one can still feel free while conforming to the rules. Indeed, one follows rather than obeying, one is influenced rather than being forced or coerced. Though the highway stands as an apparatus of control in which freedom is enacted, it nonetheless needs to remain enjoyable to be powerful, according to Galloway. In this regard, the highway challenges our vision of control in the sense that there are no oppressor, no oppressed: one is not the victim of control, but its beneficiary. Control is therefore flexible, opened and inclusive. Most importantly, procedures of control must, in order to be viable, hide behind attractive interfaces. In fact, enjoyment is the alibi of control; it is what enables the individual to feel that she is driving when actually, she is being driven. Freedom is in fact the main object of what Galloway calls ludic capitalism; it is not so much that freedom needs to be experienced or explored, but consumed like any other commodity[496]. Control, on the other hand, does not depend anymore on a bureaucratic process of decision-making but stems from a purely technical organization, which is protocol.

In sum, the system of freedom governance that Galloway has metaphorized under the highway is a "delicate dance between freedom and control[497]" in which the latter has the upper-hand. Galloway's emphasis on control, as the directing principle of the network, will constitute the object of the next section.

[496]Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.143

[497] Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2004) p.75

5.5 GALLOWAY ON FOUCAULT: THINKERS OF PROTOCOL

In *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*[498], Chun argues that thinkers such as Foucault and Deleuze left their imprint in the current understanding of new media in overemphasizing the actual powerfulness of networks of power. For this last section, I would like to rearticulate Galloway's appropriation of Foucault's legacy insofar as I believe that Galloway still falls into the pitfall pinpointed by Chun.

Galloway is inspired by Foucault's genealogical enterprise. As mentionned in chapter 2, Foucault's genealogy proposes a model of inquiry purged of all considerations for the individual, that is, the *social* subject of history. Instead, he aims to exhume the anonymous subject. Galloway, for his part, draws a cartography of behavior and practices through the prism of power and control. This means that his approach allows for the conceptualization of responsibility, autonomy and freedom. But they are insofar as these issues stand as the strategical outcome of protocol, and not the reverse. Hence, I am suggesting that his understanding of the protocological still confine media into an enclosed logic of control. Galloway writes:

> Biopolitics and biopower are Foucault's terms for protocol as it relates to life forms. They are Foucault's terms for the statistical coding, the *making-statistical,* of large living masses, such that any singular life-form within that mass may be compared in its organic nature to the totality. This is exactly how protocol functions, as a management style for distributed masses of autonomous agents[499].

For Foucault, dynamics of power and governance cannot be overcome or overthrown. In this respect, he was not interested in developing practices of liberation and has

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[498] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006)

[499] Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2004) p.87

denied the existence of a counter power. On the contrary, power and governance emerge as intrinsic to human life and are co-extensive with the social. Galloway's account of protocol, that is, of decentralized control, is in complete agreement with Foucault's conception of power-relations.

According to Galloway a network is a technology of governance, that is, of power and control. As modes of control, networks are multiple: they can be hierarchical, chaotic, disruptive, regulative, linear or non-linear[500]. While social networks are commonly associated with popular digital interfaces such as Instagram, Facebook or Snapchat, Galloway argues that they are the contemporary re-enactment of old power relations. It is these power relations that Galloway choses to focus on, insofar as these relations are enabled through the connectivity of protocol. As we may feel more connected than ever, one of Galloway's originalities is to argue that protocol produces the core structure of our societies. "As a system of management that only exists in a space populated by a multitude of independent, vital agents[501]", the protocol forms and informs the socio-political sphere and traverses every form of life, to the point that life itself is the intertwinement of protocological techniques. In this regard, Galloway does not wish to develop alternatives to protocol. Instead, he believes it essential to work through the protocol and find strategies of resistance within its structure.

Drawing on Deleuze, Galloway argues that to every society corresponds a type of machine that constitutes both its foundation and its accomplishment. Sovereign societies are grounded in the mechanical, while disciplinary societies operate with thermodynamic machines. Control societies emerge with computers. Digital societies

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[500] Networks have been present since Ancient Times, either as a chain of triumph or the web or ruins. "In the tragedy *Agamemnon* Aeschylus describes two types of networks. The first, an actual communication network, is described in detail but remains off stage. The second, a meshwork of traps, while visible and present is but a symbol of larger machinations. The communications network is a chain of fire beacons, spanning a few hundred miles, that carried the message of the of Troy back to Argos, thus warning of the victor Agamemnon's imminent homecoming (…) But later, upon the return of Agamemnon to his hearth, a second net is deployed, this one a "vast voluminous net used by Clytemnestra to ensnare her husband and bring about his ruin. This voluminous net, later decried by the chorus as a foul spider web"
See: Alexander Galloway, 'Networks', in *Critical terms for Media Studies*, eds. W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen (University of Chicago Press, 2010) p.280

[501] Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2004) p.82

are equipped with the internet. They function with algorithms and codes. It is thus not the network that constitutes the nucleus of the internet, but protocol. As Galloway states, protocol is in fact the mapping out of the network:

> The concept of protocol refers to all technoscientific rules and standards that govern relationships within networks. Protocols abound in technoculture. They are rooted in the laws of nature, yet they sculpt the spheres of the social and the cultural. They are principles of networked interrelationality, yet they are also principles of political organization[502].

Taken this way, protocol encodes the network, regulates relationships; it is the very condition of their formalization. It is an anonymous, a non-human apparatus of control. However, in the same way that Foucault understands power as what enables rather than what represses, Galloway thinks protocol as what allows rather than disallows. As a system of control, the protocol switches on relational circuits, perpetuates a system of organization and produces a conglomerate of agents. In describing the internet as a decentralized mass of data which is essentially distributive, Galloway rationalizes the structural components of cyberspace and dissolves the subject into this opaque system of interconnectivity.

Protocol is penetrating and articulating every move of the digital space. It is the architectural principle of the internet. As such, it stands as the reactualisation of the panopticon, insofar as it is geared towards efficiency and productivity. Like Foucault's panopticon, Galloway's protocol deploys a system of normalization and exploitation. The subject, on the other hand, disappears, and the individual becomes dividual — that is, divisible into data. It is an object of exchange and transfer. This resonates with the concerns of Christian Fauré who claims that the algorithmatization of human existence is articulating a new model of discursivity; a hermeneutic of the subject without a subject in which one just needs to be plugged in, connected and interfaced to produce data[503]. Despite Galloway's reluctance to define networks as the world's most self-evident architecture, he however insists on deciphering its mesh.

> What matters more and more is the very distribution and dispersal of action throughout the network, a dispersal that would ask us to define networks less in terms of the nodes and more

[502] Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.28

[503] Christian Fauré, 'Les interfaces digitales', in *Digital Studies : organologies des savoirs et technologies de la connaissance*, ed. Bernard Stiegler (Paris: Fyp éditions, 2014)

> in terms of the edges—or even in terms other than the entire, overly spatialized dichotomy of nodes and edges altogether[504].

Protocol epitomizes the social as a network of relations, rules and conventions and could be said to act as a mediatic form of Foucault's historical a priori. However, Galloway is aware of the limits that the term 'relation' brings about[505]. He acknowledges that life cannot be solely reduced to a system of lineage. However, the network is not subsidiary to human action either. This leads Galloway to conclude, quite ambiguously, that "no one controls networks, but networks are controlled[506]".

5.6 KEY POINTS

Stiegler stresses that technics is a grammatization process and closely ties the question of technics with that of meaning. While comparing his work with Benjamin's theory of distraction, I have explained that his thoughts on technology give the privilege to attentive concentration and contemplative experience. I have also explained that for Stiegler, technologies are always affecting the individual, either curing or poisoning their audience, individuating or dis-individuating the individual. My purpose was to suggest that Stiegler's approach to the question of technology and aesthetics remained logocentric. Galloway, for his part, proposes a third paradigm, a paradigm of the middle. Indeed, his thoughts on excommunication, furious media, and the protocol, challenges the very idea of a technology filled with meaning. Instead, current networks give rise to the aesthetic of the effect; the experience of the meaningless (provided that it is enjoyable).

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[504] Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.157

[505] Galloway writes: "Should we define an essential property — "relation" or "interrelation"—and construct a concept of the network from that? This could provide a starting point, but defining essences is always a tricky business. Relation always presupposes at least two "things" that are related. Relation is not, then, a "thing" but the relation between things. Is it a gap, an interval, a synapse? We are led into even more treacherous waters: relation is "the nothing" between two things. Following such a line of argument, our notion of "network" would be founded on the most insubstantial of substances."
Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.37

[506] Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.39

Is there an alternative to Furious media? The highway? The network? Or the dominance of the logos in general? Unlike Stiegler, Galloway is not a thinker of the alternative. However, he argues that furious media are not inevitable, nor is the reduction of freedom to the highway. In this regard, Galloway finds in the figure of Aphrodite another mode of mediation, which he considers worth of attention:

> Aphrodite, whose name means "rising up out of the foam," is a mixture of desire, lust, and sex. Aphrodite spans two different poles, two different aspects, often typified by Aphrodite *ourania* and Aphrodite *pandēmos*, the one sprung from her father Ouranos and the other disseminated into the pandemonium of the common people(…)From Hermes she gains the mediatory promiscuity of mixing, inseminating and cross fertilizing; from Iris she gains a somatic immediacy, appearing as surging waves and surging bodies; from the Furies she gains a generic commonality, resulting in non-reproductive sexual desires, a non or pure desire[507].

In Galloway's own words, Aphrodite is the lover of the middle. She is the perfect oscillation between determination and indetermination. She cultivates the "elusive promiscuities of Hermes[508]" and possesses also the "translucent immanence of iris[509]". By the means of these compelling allegories, it seems evident that Galloway refuses to consider technology only through their capacity to produce *or* destroy signification. Instead, he proposes to think technology as an opaque mediation.

However, it occurs that Galloway's belief in the control paradigm is still preponderant. Indeed, just as the disciplinary served, for Foucault, as the framework for the enactment of liberty, protocological control serves, for Galloway, as the grid for the experience of freedom. Hence, the question that will occupy the next chapter is the following; can we think freedom independently from the architectures of control?

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[507] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.64
[508] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.68
[509] Eugene Thacker, Alexander R. Galloway and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.68

VI- WENDY HUI KYONG CHUN: FREEING FREEDOM FROM CONTROL

"When freedom is conflated with security, freedom loses its meaning — freedom is no longer free".
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun[510].

According to Stiegler, the marketization of human existence[511] precipitates us into a culture with no culture, that is, into a nihilist state with no hope, desire, or possibility for change[512]. It is because we are at a critical stage, Stiegler argues, that we must take a decision and reinvent ourselves. In other words, we must develop strategies of freedom in order to escape the reality of control.

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun argues that these conclusions are the result of a paranoiac legacy. A legacy we owe more specifically to Foucault and Deleuze. Concerning Foucault, she explains that his reading of Bentham's panopticon left a mark in our understanding of control and had encouraged "paranoid narratives of surveillance[513]". This paranoid narrative surrounding the panopticon stems indeed from the conflation of visibility with surveillance and the belief that if one *may be* seen, one *is* therefore seen. Yet, for Chun, the internet shows almost the reverse insofar

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[510] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.vii

[511] It being understood as the systematic tracking of online activities eventually sold to companies in order to predict the needs of consumer.

[512] See Bernard Stiegler, 'La grande bifurcation vers le néguantropos, exceptions et sélections dans la noodiversité', in *Pourquoi nous sommes tous Nietzschéen ?* eds. Dorian Astor and Alain Jugnon (Les impressions nouvelles, 2016).

[513] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.6

as it is not because one's online activities can be the object of surveillance that it is actually the case. The error, she says, is to treat possibility as a fact[514]. Indeed, though the risk of prosecution exists, it remains very low, which is the reason why the internet favours 'deviant' behavior such as child pornography. If the internet was a giant panopticon, that is, a system geared toward regulation and normalization, then criminal activities would be not the significant problem it however is at the moment. In fact, Chun says, the internet provokes a crisis of discipline. Though networks seem to legitimate theories of control and surveillance, online interactions are rarely the object of the often-fantasized panoptic gaze. Besides, the conflation of control with network protocol has led to superficial law enforcement procedures in which the suppression of contents appears to be enough to solve a social issue. For Chun, the McLuhan-esque belief that *the message is the medium* has convinced us that the solution to a problem, such as online child pornography or racism, is to suppress the medium in order to supress the message[515]. It is therefore crucial, she argues, to revise our views on the internet instead of falsely metaphorizing the digital as a tentacling monster tracking and spying our every move[516].

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[514] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.84

[515] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.93

[516] In a more recent work, Chun uses once again her background in Humanities and Systems Design Engineering to reflect on digital surveillance. In *Updating to Remain the Same*, she asks: "Has the Internet destroyed the world or made it a better place? Does it foster democracy or total surveillance? Community or isolation? Information or pornography? Well-adjusted citizens or homicidal psychopaths?" (p. IX). She describes, quite ironically, new media as "wonderfully creepy". Yet, "we need to disabuse ourselves of several assumptions, most importantly that there exists a "natural" relationship between technology and (the lack of) freedom" (p. IX). The gap between our perception of the digital and its actual operations is what she aims to tackle. But while she fears in *Control and Freedom* that our diligence to secure freedom may cost us our very freedom — as we shall see throughout this chapter — she defends in *Updating to Remain the Same* the right for users to be vulnerable online without being attacked or preyed upon. To her viewpoint, the privatization of the internet is a false solution, as it does not guarantee freedom but surveillance (this issue will be discussed further in the conclusion). Yet, the internet (and the network in general) is a discursive construction that seduces our imaginary and offers a compelling experience of freedom. Moreover, it is essential to the dynamics of contemporary neoliberalism, that is, the economic and cultural functioning of our society. The digital is generative of paradoxes, Chun tells us, and this is these very paradoxes that she investigates. While Chun proposes a critical reflection on the possibility of developing, strengthening public rights in the context of media culture, Soshana Zuboff invites us, on the other hand, to resist by the means of a collective action the instrumentarian power of surveillance capitalism. She argues indeed that current digital powers threaten human nature, that is, the individual's self-determination and moral autonomy. Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* makes a clear correlation between instrumentarian power of information economy and totalitarianism: "surveillance capitalism unitarily claim human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data. Although some of these data are applied to product or service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary behavioral surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as 'machine intelligence', and fabricated into prediction products that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later" (p.14).Whereas

Chun argues overall that we have been giving too much power to control. This last chapter will be the opportunity for me to expose her views. I will end this chapter by suggesting through the work of Chun regarding the issue of control and freedom, that a way to free ourselves from what Stiegler has coined as technologies of psychopower, would be to first free ourselves from our paranoid knowledge about technologies. This means; stop taking control for an established fact, but rather as a possibility. Hence, the purpose of this chapter will be to show how the reduction of freedom to an object of control "produces and is produced by paranoia[517]".

6.1 FREEDOM, AUTONOMY AND SELF-CONTROL

In her introduction to *Control and Freedom*, Chun reminds us the etymology of freedom. She thus indicates:

> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the Old English *frei* (derived from Sanskrit) meant dear and described all those close or related to the head of the family (hence friends). Conversely in Latin, *libertas* denoted the legal state of being free versus enslaved and was later extended to children (*liberi*), meaning literally the free members of the household. Those who are one's friends are free; those who are not are slaves. But, like love, freedom exceeds the subject. Liberty is linked to human subjectivity; freedom is not. The Declaration of Independence, for example, describes men as having liberty and the nation as being free. Free will — "the quality of being free from the control of fate or necessity"— may first have been

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Chun defends the right to be vulnerable, it is interesting to note that Zuboff seems rather on the side of safety, as she seeks a "right to sanctuary" from this tentacling and unprecedented form of power that regulates both the real and virtual world.

See: Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2016)
Soshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London: Profile Books, 2018)

[517] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) viii

> attributed to human will, but Newtonian physics attributes freedom— degrees of freedom, free bodies— to objects[518].

She thus insists that freedom was, in its very etymology, not bound to institutions, nor did it used to designate a self-determining and autonomous subject. Moreover, freedom was not yet coined as a value. Instead, freedom originally resonated with priceless marks of affection. The aim of her book is to stress how with time, the concept of freedom came to be separated with concepts of equality and fraternity to be rather understood in terms of liberty of movement (exemplified in the *free*way or the figure of the explorer in the cyberspace of 1990's, which was sold as a mass-medium for freedom), before suffering from the rules of commerce. According to Chun, this pairing of freedom with economy cheapened the very notion of freedom to a mere commodity exchangeable for a fee (this is particularly true with war slogans such as "freedom comes with a price"). More recently, Chun argues that freedom has conflated with control. This association has thus led to the belief that to be free means to be safe [519].

Before moving on Chun's criticisms on the paranoia of control, few things need to be said about freedom and its historical conflation with control. The fact that freedom has been repeatedly casted as navigability, self-control is not peculiar to the contemporary world.

Let us for example go back to the Greeks for whom the concept of autonomy is understood as a synonym for independence and self-governance. In Plato's *Alcibiades*, we learn for example that one is recognized as an autonomous being when one is granted the right to participate in the life of the city, so that autonomy is the key attribute of the adult. However, adulthood is not a sufficient criterion in this case, for one needs not only to be of a certain age, but of a certain social class. In Plato's work, only the citizen is considered autonomous, which thus excludes women and slaves.

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[518] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) introduction, p.9-10

[519] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.9

Autonomy is linked to mastery. This is particularly true in Plato's tripartite conception of the soul and the metaphor of the chariot:

> We will liken the soul to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. […] the charioteer of the human soul drives a pair, one of the horses is noble and of noble breed, but the other quite the opposite in breed and character. Therefore, in our case the driving is necessarily difficult and troublesome[520].

For Plato, autonomy is not the exclusive object of reason. Instead, it is described as the capacity to navigate wisely between the lower and the higher parts of the human soul. It is about finding the right balance between reason and passion, so that autonomy does not necessarily equate to pure rationality. However, the balance between the two is always on the verge of being compromised, which is why the exercise is characterized as 'troublesome'. In this respect, practices of self-realization are elaborated through forms of coercion that maintain this fragile state of equilibrium.

Autonomy is represented by the figure of the charioteer. It stands above reason and passion, and governs the activity of self-design. In this respect, *to be* autonomous does not make sense, for example, because it is not about being, but about acting, the same way it does not belong to the innate, but the acquired. For the Ancients, as we have seen in the first section of the thesis when comparing Stiegler and Foucault's interpretation of care, the ideal of autonomy serves as a motivation for the elaboration of an ethics of self. Indeed, to problematize autonomy necessitates the problematizing of a certain notion of subjectivity, itself indispensable to think responsibility. However, autonomy was at that time understood primarily in terms of *lack* of dependence. One was therefore autonomous when alone, self-sufficient, and emotionally indifferent towards external causes. This attitude of indifference was especially prevalent with the Stoics, for example[521]. Aristotle suggests for his part in *Nichomachean Ethics* that independence *(autarkeia)* constitutes the key element for

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[520] Plato, *Phaedrus,* in *Plato in twelve volumes, vol. 9*, translated by Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 1925) 246a–254e.

[521] This Stoic indifference shall not be confused with carelessness. It is not that the Stoics intended to aestheticize a careless relationship to the world, for example. Pierre Hadot writes: "For the Stoics, too, there is only one thing which is not indifferent; but here it is moral intention, which is good and engages human beings to modify themselves and their attitude with regard to the world. Indifference consists in making no differences, but in equally wanting and even equally loving everything that is willed by Fate". See: Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004) p.133

happiness. This means that the ideal of autonomy can only be attained through the undertaking of a discipline over oneself and a distancing with others.

While practices of care acknowledge the presence of the other, they remain mostly designed for the individual, insofar as Ancient practices of care encourage the individual to take responsibility for herself first. Once again, it is the principle of (self)-mastery that regulates the *tekhne tou biou*. On this point, Foucault insists:

> The apprehension is concentrated above all on the crossover point of the agitations and troubles, taking account of the fact that one had best correct the soul if one does not want the body to get the better of it, and rectify the body if one wants it to remain completely in control of itself[522].

However, it is not always enough to control oneself, one may also need to exert a certain power over the other. This is the case in Plato's *Alcibiades*, as Alcibiades is told by Socrates that in order to be a good politician, he needs to take care, that is, to develop a *tekhne*, which will enable him to govern the entire city.

Overall, the 'techniques of the self' formulated by the Ancients put less the emphasis on the self than on power, insofar as the free individual is the one who exercises power. As Deleuze states, we are confronted with the Greeks by practices of subjectivation without subjects[523].

The concern for the *I* arose with modern philosophy and Descartes, so that subjectivation disappears to the profit of the knowing subject and with it, the whole conception of ethics is turned upside down. If in Ancient philosophy the understanding of autonomy is mostly turned towards actions (*praxis*), we owe to modern philosophers like Kant its association with a morality of intentions. The *Dictionary of Untranslatables* summarizes the historical and definitional complexity of the notion of *praxis* as follows:

> The term praxis [πρᾶξις]—always seen in modern languages as imported from Greek, even though German and to a certain extent Italian have naturalized it (die Praxis [with a German plural, die Praxen], la prassi)—is central in contemporary philosophy, where it designates, depending on the case, an alternative to the points of view and values of being of logos [λόγος] or language, of theory or speculation, of form or structure, and so on. It refers, then, either to an Aristotelian version (Nichomachean Ethics) that opposes it to poiêsis [ποίησις] and relates

[522] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 3: The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998) p.56
[523] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) p.102-103

> it to an ethics and a politics of "prudence" (phronêsis [φρόνησις]), or to a Marxist version (Theses on Feuerbach) that identifies it with the effort to transform the existing world rooted in labor and class struggle (umwälzende or revolutionäre Praxis). Between these two poles there is a Kantian version of the practical element of action (das Praktische) and the "primacy of practical reason," which, by assigning to philosophy an infinite task of moralizing human nature (a task called "pragmatic" [pragmatisch]), consummates the break with naturalism and prefigures the dilemmas of collective historical action[524].

Here, autonomy is described as the inner capacity to determine whether or not one's conduct is morally good and therefore, universally applicable. We thus witness a reversal in the conception of autonomy. Indeed, the activity of self-governance is not oriented towards actions and their consequences. Instead, it is one's personal faith that serves as a guiding principle. It means also that being autonomous is not a matter of being efficient but authentic. As such, autonomy is not something that must be appropriated or exercised, but acknowledged by the subject.

Autonomy therefore appears as an innate quality of the human that differentiates her from the animal. Kant explains in this regard that autonomy is rooted in the noumenal self, while feelings and inclinations belong to the phenomenal self. Here, the opposition between autonomy and heteronomy is not any different from the opposition we find in the Ancients between reason and passion. But while the Greeks thought autonomy in terms of mastery, Kant puts the stress on rationality, judgment and intentions. In this respect, one moves from a discursivity of action — which is constitutive of ethics — to that of agency — which is the object of morality. This said, it occurs nonetheless that both Ancient and Modern philosophy tends to stress autonomy as a lack of dependence, whether it is a lack of dependence from others or from one's personal inclinations[525]. Overall, Kant's moral philosophy suggests that autonomy necessitates freedom, which is its condition of possibility:

> The concept of freedom is the central normative and metaphysical concept in Kant's philosophy. Freedom of choice and action from constraint by external forces but also even from one's own mere inclinations, something that can be achieved not by the elimination of inclinations, which is not possible for human beings, but by the subjection of inclination to the rule of reason and its demand for universalizability, which Kant ultimately calls "autonomy", "the property of the will by which it is a law to itself" (G 4:440), is the ultimate value for Kant, the only value that can be an end in itself and has a dignity beyond all price (4:435–6). Freedom

[524] Etienne Balibar, Barbara Cassin and Sandra Laugier, 'Praxis', in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, eds. Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, Michael Wood (Princeton University Press, 2014) p.820

[525] see Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004)

> of the will, the ability to initiate an action spontaneously, independently of determination by mere laws of nature, so that every human agent has the capacity to act in accordance with the moral law no matter what might seem to be predicted by her entire prior history, is for Kant only a logical possibility in theoretical philosophy but an inescapable postulate of pure practical reason, "the necessary condition of … the complete fulfillment of the moral law". For Kant, the relation between these two concepts, autonomy as our ultimate value and freedom of the will as our ultimate metaphysical property, although one assertible only on practical grounds, is intimate, to say the least – the unconditional moral law that enjoins us above all else to preserve and promote freedom of action "is merely the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason, this being identical with the positive concept of freedom" (5:29)although his view about what to do with this identity is not stable[526].

Kant's transcendental idealism conceives freedom as an innate self-active reason, while autonomy acts out as its norm. Autonomy is therefore the spontaneous subjection to a self-imposed law. In other words, one could say that autonomy is the application of freedom and that one cannot be autonomous if not radically free.

Kant teaches us that freedom constitutes the specificity of the human. It is because we are free that we are, unlike animals, embedded with dignity. Hence, following the law of reason is a way for human beings to elevate themselves to the type of being they already are and ought to be. Here, two things must be noted; on one hand, freedom can only be exercised if forced upon the individual (though, in this case, the coercion is internal to the subject and not external, as it is the case for the Greeks). On the other hand, and this may be more significant: Kant's account of freedom provides us with a perception of freedom which is not entirely free or boundless, insofar as it depends on the existence of the subject. Indeed, in order to be recognized, actualized, or experienced, freedom cannot be detached from a certain acknowledgement of identity as its prior condition. This impossibility to detach freedom from the subject is a difficulty that Sartre will encounter too and will leave him no other choice than embracing freedom as an existential burden constitutive of the human. In both cases, freedom is coerced and coercive, alienated and alienating. The fact that they both interpret the gift of freedom as a duty to be, insofar as to be free means to be responsible, narrows the gap between freedom and (self)-control.

[526] Paul Guyer, 'Freedom, Will, Autonomy', in *Immanuel Kant: Key Concepts*, eds. Kristina Engelhard and Will Dudley (Durham: Routledge, 2011)

6.2 THE TECHNOLOGIZATION OF FREEDOM

Stiegler argues for his part that autonomy springs from heteronomy. Aiming to desacralize the concept of autonomy, Stiegler is equally reluctant to develop a theory that asserts the primacy of a self-constitutive subject. According to Stiegler, to argue for the pre-existence of an autonomous subject— as if an ego prior to experience could exist— would be untenable because of its metaphysical undertone. Instead, one must depart from heteronomy of technics:

> Now, my point of view is that pure autonomy does not exist. My own position – and it is very close to Derrida's – is that there is never an autonomy with- out a link to a heteronomy, i.e., with a link to technics. Because for example, in Greek society people were creating their autonomy through a therapeutic use of the pharmakon of writing, i.e., of the technique of writing. So, autonomy is always a limited autonomy, never a pure autonomy. Now, all my questions are extremely classical in fact. But, with a very small change, in that it is impossible to oppose autonomy and heteronomy[527].

This means not only that autonomy *depends* on external constraints, but that it is acquired throughout one's internalization of automatisms. I have already stressed this issue in chapter 3.

The problem lies not so much in Stiegler's attempt to make of autonomy a matter of discipline, for these themes appear already in the Ancient's ethics of care. Yet, Stiegler gives the issue a new turn when throwing autonomy into the hands of technics. Indeed, his philosophical move suggests that freedom is no longer the attribute of the human but that of technology. It means in this respect that freedom is not the outcome of a decision but the effect of a technical framework. More broadly, it means that freedom is *programmable*. This assumption is dangerous, for it leads Stiegler to mostly perceive freedom as a technological problem that needs to be solved by the means of technologies.

Indeed, I have explained earlier that our very experience of freedom is, according to Stiegler, presently conditioned by media of psychopower which promote cynical entertainment. In this respect, freedom has become devaluated, turned into

[527] Pieter C. Lemmens, 'This system does not produce pleasure anymore: An interview with Bernard Stiegler', *Krisis*, 1 (2011) 33-42.

merchandise. In other words, freedom is used as a form of propaganda for cultural capitalism, insofar as freedom equates entertainment. On this point, Stiegler comes close to Galloway and his criticism of ludic capitalism "that has taken over the old concepts of discipline[528]". Stiegler thus proposes to restore freedom and autonomy through the reactivation techniques of care, which, as stated above, are closely tied to ideologies of control and mastery.

Chun's work proposes to investigate the effects of the ideological pairing of freedom and control. Such pairing leads us to believe that freedom is *controllable*. However, she precisely argues that this runs the risk of turning the political problem of freedom into a mere technological issue that is simply solvable through the implementations of procedures without taking into account that these procedures may fail to operate or grasp clearly the nature of the problem.

Yet technologies cannot adequately respond to social problems. Chun uses child online pornography as an example:

> Cyberporn became a pressing public danger in 1995. The CDA passed the U.S. Senate with an overwhelming majority after senators perused tightly bound printouts of ''perverse'' images that Senator James Exon's ''friend'' had downloaded. Subsequently passed by Congress, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 both deregulated the telecommunications industry—allegedly opening access for all citizens to the Internet—and regulated Internet content for the first time. Time and Newsweek published special features on cyberporn with the respective titles, ''On a Screen Near You, Cyberporn: A New Study Shows How Pervasive and Wild It Really Is'' and ''No Place for Kids? A Parent's Guide to Sex on the Internet.'' Philip Elmer-Dewitt's ''On a Screen Near You, Cyberporn'' launched a particularly heated online and off-line debate over pornography's pervasiveness on the so-called information superhighway, and was accused of launching the ''Great Internet Sex Panic of 1995".[529]

And then concludes:

> Anxieties over cyberporn exceed the simple worry over the present conditions. In order to understand cyberporn's ramifications, we are told to imagine a catastrophic future of unbearable and uncontrollable contact. This call assumes that catastrophe could be avoided if pornography were simply purged from this medium.[530]

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[528] Alexander R. Galloway, *The interface effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) p.27
[529] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.77
[530] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.97

Overall, she argues that the panic inspired by the possibility to be exposed to pornographic images raised the issue of increasing state regulations in order to protect internet users, and more specifically children, from inappropriate contents. This fear of perversion, Chun argues, boldly assumes a correspondence between the medium and the message. But it also assumes a correspondence between the user's true identity and the content he or she is seeing, as if watching child pornography meant necessarily being pedophile. This technology-determinist account of social issues equally reduces pornography and pedophilia into a mere question of contents availability that only needs to be suppressed to be considered solved. As such, Chun states that freedom cannot be defined as a pattern of decisions and solutions. She will argue instead, using the work of Jean-Luc Nancy[531], that freedom is what *engenders* decisions. To confine freedom into the procedural would, on the reverse, only destroy what one aims to protect.

6.3 THE EYE OF POWER

The key word to Chun's argument is paranoia, as she argues that our current ideologies of freedom stem from the fear of control and surveillance, which ironically, only reinforces the reality of control. Fiber-optic networks, she argues, contributes to spread a visual culture in which one is under the constant impression of being seen and thus increases the fear of being caught doing something reprehensible or socially unaccepted:

> Online, one is not simply a spectator-citizen-commodity owner. Even when ''just viewing'' or ''lurking,'' one actively sends and receives data (all spectators are still visible—the degree of their visibility, or more properly their traceability, is the issue). Dreams of vision from afar coexist with the media's relentless drive toward circulation. As I asserted in the introduction, fiber-optic networks threaten to break the glass so that nothing screens the subject from the circulation of images. Instead of only celebrities being caught in the glare of publicity, average citizens find themselves blinded and harassed[532].

[531] I have suggested earlier that Kant's account of freedom may have participated in the overall narrative that freedom is not free. This notion of freedom as coercion has been reprised by Sartre (see chapter 1). However, in order to avoid any confusion here, it must be highlighted that Nancy's reading of Kant precisely argue the opposite. According to Nancy, we owe to Kant a model of freedom without (rational) foundation, that is, a freedom entirely free.

[532] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.98

This architecture of visibility offered by fiber-optic networks is often mistaken for actual surveillance in which the internet is polarized between spectators and spectacles, lurkers and images, predators and preys. Though it is tempting to portray the internet as a cinematic panopticon filled with voyeurs, Chun believes that it only perpetuates the paranoid confusion between visibility and surveillance, possibility and actuality.

I will uncover this issue by looking at Foucault's reading of Bentham's model of the panopticon[533], but before that, I would like to go back to Sartre. Indeed, I believe that the anxiety of being seen could be traced back to his work and his account of the gaze, which was already acknowledged as paranoiac at the time.[534] The purpose of this first paragraph is to show how the paranoia of surveillance pinpointed by Chun denotes a Sartrean conception of the gaze and a Foucauldian understanding of panopticism.

Presented through and through as an external negation in Sartre's philosophy,

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[533] It must be highlighted that criticisms regarding Bentham's panopticon developed in this section concern Foucault's appropriation of such model in *Discipline and Punish*. It can be said indeed, that Foucault had contributed to the diffusion of misleading ideas about Bentham's philosophy of power relations. Though, they both share a similar conception of governance, Foucault may have too hastily circumscribed the panopticon into the domain of the penal, for example. In doing so, he has reduced the panoptic paradigm into a coercive measure. Following this understanding, the panopticon is often apprehended as a deeply anxiogenic structure. This is the case with Wendy Hui Kyong Chun in *Control and Freedom*, when she coins the panopticon as a "disciplinary mechanism" in which the inmate, never certain if she is seen or not, becomes paranoid and is condemned to construct herself with the belief she is the object of surveillance. Chun even suggests in a foot note referring to the work of Freud, that in this case, the process of subjectivation becomes a paranoid construction insofar as the identity of the inmate is forged through urge or the duty to be *rehabilitated* in the eye of the viewer. (And if we take the actuality of panopticism for granted, there would be no more identity construction/constitution, that is, of subjectivation as examined earlier throughout the chapters dedicated on Foucault and Stiegler, only processes of rehabilitation).

Yet, for Bentham, the panopticon was first imagined as plural as there is not just one model of panoticism. Besides, while Foucault presents the panopticon as a pervasive means of social control, Bentham's own theory minimized the actual power of the panopticon, insofar as social control cannot be performed through its sole means.

See *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012)

[534] Leo Fretz, 'Individuality in Sartre's Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. Christina Howells (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992)

the other appears to the Cogito as *not* being *me*[535]. The subject exists as body in a situation and experiences the world as phenomena that is both irremediably close and far from her. In this respect, the other "belongs to my distance[536]". The reverse is also true; I am made object through the eyes of the other. Hence, what constitutes my primary relationship towards the other is that of object-ness. What fundamentally crystallizes my encounter with the other is the experience of the look, for seeing means being seen. Sartre indeed defines the gaze as the essential condition for one to feel ashamed or vulnerable. It is because I am being looked at, because I am visible, that I experience such feelings. In this respect, the gaze is traumatic;

> The look which the eyes manifest, no matter what kind of eyes they are, is a pure reference to myself. What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that there is someone there; it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place and that I cannot in any case escape from the space in which I am without defense — in short, that *I am seen*[537].

The same way Plato suggests in the *Republic*[538] that one, once turned invisible, would easily commit a crime because of the impossibility to be seen and therefore to be punished, Sartre teaches us that the gaze restrains the individual, insofar as the gaze is the vector of a moral judgement. In Sartre's work, the other is always a limit to my freedom, but also a threat.

Sartre's account of the gaze already gives us a foretaste of the paranoia of surveillance insofar the other is a "judge[539]" and a source of anxiety that pushes the individual to behave[540]. As objectifying power, the gaze enables me to constitute myself, that is, to subjectivize myself through the way I am seen as body-for-others. Sartre writes:

> I grasp the Other's look at the very center of my *act* as the solidification and alienation of my possibilities. In fear or in anxious or prudent anticipation, I perceive that these possibilities which I *am* and which are the condition of my transcendence are given also to another, given

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[535] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York; Washington Square Press, 1956), p.339
[536] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York; Washington Square Press, 1956) p.343
[537] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York; Washington Square Press, 1956, p.347
[538] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Francis Macdonald Cornford (Oxford, London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1945) p.44-49
[539] Jean Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964) p.134
[540] See *Words* and *No Exit*.

> as about to be transcendence in turn by his own possibilities. The Other as a look is only that — my transcendence transcended. Of course I still *am* my possibilities in the mode of non-thetic consciousness of these possibilities. But at the same time the look alienates them from me[541].

In this respect, the power of observation is, in Sartre's work, reduced to one's capacity to cast judgment on his peers[542]. As I have suggested in the first chapter of this thesis, Sartre fails to fully incorporate the other in the activity of self-making, which is still caught in "the tragic loneliness of the cogito[543]". Yet, what could be added at this stage is that Sartre's philosophy already theorizes the theme of visibility (through the experience of the look) as something oppressive. Having said so, Sartre always make sure to dissociate power from freedom. However, this dissociation collapses with Foucault.

I have explained earlier when contrasting Sartre with Foucault on the process of subjectivation, that for Foucault, the other produces more than he represses. While the Sartrean philosophy suggests that I constitute myself *against* the other, the Foucauldian perspective puts the emphasis on how I constitute myself *with* and *through* the other. The former ruminates at length on how the other turns me into an object, whereas the latter claims that despite the normalizing power of the gaze, the individual produces herself as subject.[544] Whereas Sartre theorizes the gaze of the other as essentially objectifying, Foucault thinks the dynamic of observation as subjectifying. He thus ties power and freedom together. Here is where Bentham's panopticon comes in as useful to understand how surveillance plays out.

Drawing on Bentham's model of the perfect prison, Foucault introduces the panopticon as an eloquent illustration of the productive virtues of the look. Bentham's panopticon (*pan* meaning "all", and *opticon* meaning "sight") is a perimeter building in the form of a ring with a tower at its center. As a device of behavior control, the

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[541] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York; Washington Square Press, 1956) p.352

[542] Sartre makes the difference between the body *for-me* and the body *for-others*, arguing that the former is subjected to the latter. If the self is a point of view taken upon an ensemble of acts, it is also a point of view upon an ensemble of characteristics imposed by others. For example, Sartre would say, as mentions Phyllis Sutton-Morris in "self-creating selves" that I am ugly because I am viewed as ugly.

[543] Christina Howells, *Sartre's Theory of Literature* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association MHRA Texts and Dissertations volume 14, 1979)

[544] See the chapter on Foucault and Stiegler's respective understanding of care.

building is divided into cells, each equipped with a window facing the central tower. In this context, prisoners are the objects of constant surveillance, despite their jailors not being visible. Thus, they are seen without being able to see. In this architectural model of surveillance, Foucault acknowledges indeed that the individual is considered as *object of* information and not *subject in* communication. The effect of the panopticon is to instigate in the prisoner the feeling of being seen, of being vulnerable to a faceless gaze. It is cruel because it is asymmetrical. Foucault writes in this respect that "one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen[545]". Becoming conscious of his or her visibility, the prisoner *polices* herself. In other words, the inmate disciplines her body and her attitude, through the sensation of the external gaze which is destined to become a generalized function of the social body. This is because, for Foucault, the panoptic schema is that of a seeing machine that "gives power of mind over mind[546]". But its aim is directed towards productivity and efficiency.

> It does so not for power itself, nor for the immediate salvation of a threatened society; its aim is to strengthen the social forces— to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply[547].

The gaze is normative. It is an external force, exerted upon the individual, a force which the latter responds to in becoming aware of his body as the central point of the circulation of power. But it does not mean that the individual strictly complies or submits herself to the gaze. Self is not a mere docile body passively modelled through the fluctuations of random social forces. Rather, it is the product of an active, though disciplinary, self-fashioning, insofar as power designates what turns individuals into subjects. As Foucault reminds us: "There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which

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[545] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, trans. Allen Lane (London: Penguin, 1977) p.202
[546] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, trans. Allen Lane (London: Penguin, 1977) p.206
[547] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, trans. Allen Lane (London: Penguin, 1977) p.208

subjugates and makes subject to[548]". In the case of the panopticon, the prisoner enters in the game of observation, of the visible and the invisible. Despite being disembodied or faceless, the gaze makes itself visible for it is somehow personified and materialized by the presence of the central tower. In this situation, the tower is the *sign* I am being watched.

But in fact, it is just a sign, not an irrefutable proof. As stresses Chun, the inmate cannot verify if there is a prison guard in the tower[549]. However, this is enough for the inmate to modify her behavior and be cautious. This uncertainty, Chun argues, is what enables power to effectively work on the individual, not actual observance. In other words, power feeds on paranoia and the panopticon epitomizes this reality. According to Foucault, the individual learns to constitute herself through the dichotomy between the seen and the unseen, the controllable and the uncontrollable. The prisoner may discipline herself but only does so *in relation with* the eye of power, that is, in appropriating, interiorizing the gaze which may or may not be enacted upon her. However, Foucault prefers to insist on the actuality of the gaze:

> In reality power is only exercised at a cost. Obviously, there is an economic cost, and Bentham talks about this. How many overseers will the Panopticon need? How much will the machine then cost to run? But there is also a specifically political cost. If you are too violent, you risk provoking revolts (…) In contrast to that you have the system of surveillance, which on the contrary involves very little expense. There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost[550].

As such, it is through movements of visibility/invisibility that the individual subjectivizes herself as docile body. This leads Foucault to brand the panopticon as an apparatus of actual surveillance. Once again, if one considers, as Chun does, that the presence of a surveilling prison guard cannot be proven, but only supposed, then it

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[548] Michel Foucault, 'Afterword; The Subject and Power', in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) p. 212

[549] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.7

[550] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, Josh Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 'Strategies of Power' p.154-155

goes the same for the status of the inmate as *being surveilled*. In conclusion, Bentham's panopticon is to her more an allegory of the paranoia of control, than of actual control. According to Chun, this stance is equally true for the internet. In theory, the internet appears as a giant tool for surveillance, yet, real-time spying is very rare and cyberspace too vast for the user to feel the inspector's presence. As such, the internet-user cannot internalize the panoptic gaze for the chances to get caught doing something reprehensible remain quite small.

Chun claims on the one hand that the internet illustrates the paranoia of control conveyed by Foucauldian studies on the panopticon. On the other hand, she does not think the internet fits the criteria of the panopticon. The reason for this is that Bentham's panopticon was geared towards discipline. The internet, on the other hand, rather favors deviant behavior because of the impression of invisibility[551] and anonymity, which are constitutive of the medium. Unlike the inmate, the internet user does not wonder if the prison guard *is looking* at her. Instead, she wonders if someone *could look*. Being observed is only a possibility, not a fact. Chun writes in this respect: "whether or not someone will or can access your files (…) is *fundamentally* uncertain"[552]. The uncertainty of surveillance is precisely what produces paranoia.

6.4 CONTROL OVER FREEDOM

While Galloway argues that "there is no freedom from control"[553], Chun invites us to think freedom beyond the scope of control and thus warns us:

[551] For Chun, internet provides an architecture of visibility. However, it is possible for the user to feel invisible because of the web's vastness. In some sense, total visibility guarantees forms of invisibility.
[552] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.86 my emphasis.
[553] Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit*, *A Theory of Networks* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p.53

> This twinning of control and freedom subverts the promise of freedom, turning it from a force that simultaneously breaks bonds and makes relation possible to the dream of a gated community writ large. This subversion of freedom, however, does not forever render freedom innocuous, for if anything cannot be controlled it is freedom. The emergence of the Internet as a mass medium, this book argues, epitomizes this new structure of power and the possibilities for a freedom without control[554].

In this case, Chun does not deny, or reject, the link between power and freedom. However, she argues that attributing a causality between the two phenomena is symptomatic of the ideology of control which itself is the consequence of the influence of Foucault and Deleuze in the field of new media. Their account of power relations suffers from a suffocating determinism insofar as they underestimate the possibility of disruption and are oblivious to the unpredictable and the irrational. Put otherwise, Foucault and Deleuze are paranoid because, according to Chun, they give too much power to power[555].

Deleuze's mistake, she argues, is to not take into account the vulnerabilities of technologies and to conflate "possibility with probability[556]", which is the conflation of what *may or may not* happen with what *is likely* to happen. Hence, technologies may be utilized as instruments of control, but that does not necessarily mean that they will. From her standpoint though, those who have read Foucault and Deleuze take their considerations too literally and contribute to the reinforcement of the ideology of control. According to Chun, this propensity to make of freedom the result of control is both etymological and historical, for it has been long understood as belonging to the realm of objects, rather than as an innate quality of the subject.

As a result, one wants to exercise control over freedom. Cyberculture exemplifies well the dream of control over freedom according to Chun:

> The myth of superagent users, who dismantle and engage the code, who are explorers rather than explored, screens the lurker's vulnerable position. This myth tries to convince the user-cum-lurker that it is a flâneur, who leaves no traces as it observes, or when not "lurking", it is the detective, the active searcher of information. This myth both emphasizes user control and fosters paranoia, for if the user can go anywhere it wants, cannot someone else with more knowledge and skill track the user? In order to circumvent this paranoid doubt, or any

[554] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) introduction, p.1-2
[555] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) introduction, p.9
[556]Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) introduction, p.9

> admission of vulnerability, Internet promoters produce spectacular spectacles, or at the very least sites that emphasize the agency of the user and not the server…[557]

But what constitutes Chun's object of concern is that not only are we keen on problematizing freedom as a quality that needs to be earned and owned, it also demands, as a commodity, to be secured. In fact, freedom is too hastily associated with safety, so that one is free if one is not exposed to danger. Throughout her work, Chun deciphers what appears to be the paradox of freedom. On one hand, as we explained above, freedom is produced throughout systems of control. On the other hand, the existence of these systems of control has for one sole justification freedom itself. Hence, the ideology of control shows clearly its limits for it is incapable of conceptually understanding itself other than through freedom as its motivation.

Chun asserts for her part that freedom constitutes the condition of possibility for the deployment of procedures of control instead of the reverse. Overall, Chun's book can be described as an attempt to emancipate freedom from discourses of control. In this regard, she suggests that our current conception of freedom is devious and dangerous.

6.5 THE COST OF FREEDOM

Chun believes that there is a paradox in the way we conceive freedom. Indeed, if one affirms freedom as necessarily coupled with control and agrees that being free comes at a certain cost, one actually jeopardizes freedom by the very act of guaranteeing it. Hence, the paradox of freedom is the belief that the cost of freedom is freedom itself:

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[557] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.62

> During the Afghanistan War, the second Gulf War and the subsequent occupation, t-shirts, bumper stickers, and politicians reminded us, "Freedom is not Free." This phrase, engraved on the Korean War Memorial in Washington, DC, would seem simply to say that freedom comes at the cost of soldiers' lives and civilian sacrifices. Freedom is not without cost; someone has to pay a price. This phrase, however, is open to another reading: when freedom is conflated with security, freedom loses its meaning—freedom is no longer free. If freedom is reduced to a gated community writ large, or becomes the ideological watchword of a national security state, then it can turn into nothing more than the partner of, or the alibi for, control. The very phrase "freedom is not free" can make freedom unfree when it calls on people to accept unfreedom as the cost of freedom[558].

The other consequence of the conflation of freedom and control is that of safety. While the Ancients think freedom as a coercive practice geared towards independence from social constraints, we are now confronted with a vision of freedom geared towards dependence. This understanding of freedom may have been marked by the Hobbesian model of the social contract. Indeed, Hobbes' portrayal of the social contract is an example on how freedom is easily abandoned for the promise of safety. Wherever the state of nature is depicted as a state of war of everyone against everyone, the establishing of a political power comes as a salvation. By presenting us a state of mere survival, Hobbes suggests first of all that the acquaintance with absolute freedom may not be desirable. Plus, it is implied that the experience of freedom is incompatible with the possibility of attaining the realm of a more complete existence. To exist, one must make some concessions. This is what happens in his model of the social contract in which individuals choose to become subjected to a sovereign. In Hobbes' description of the state of nature, individuals choose to secure themselves at the cost of freedom. They chose obedience to flee their responsibilities, the same way they chose the restrictions of their movements to minimize the risks of life-threatening encounters. In that sense, freedom is bargained for comfort because the experience of freedom is unbearable.

According to Chun, such a pessimistic account of freedom still prevails today and contributes to the overall devaluation of liberty for that of safety. "Freedom is not free" is the motto our contemporary society complies to, she argues. In this respect, procedures are put in place to minimize risk, so that we are confronted with a society that has developed a low tolerance towards failure and vulnerability[559]. This is

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[558] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) preface, p. vii

[559] This issue has been emphasized by Žižek, see Slavoj Žižek, 'Risk Society and its Discontents', *Historical Materialism* 2.1 (1998): 143-64

rendered even more evident with the rise of the internet as a mass medium, argues Chun. The information age deploys a discursivity of freedom through empowerment. One is safe while surfing the web because one is not exposed to "fissures, scars and other markings[560]". In this respect, procedural freedom functions through measures of suppression. One is free online because the principal vectors of inequalities and discriminations, namely, gender, race, ages and infirmities, are suppressed, effaced, or edited. In escaping and remodeling one's body, one does indeed participate in the remodeling of her social and physical condition, Chun suggests. But this model of empowerment, she says, is negative in the sense that it conceals difference, turns the visible into the invisible, and in doing so, contributes to justify inequalities in the physical world.

To illustrate her point, Chun refers to MCI's anthem commercial that aired in 1997. MCI was a former American telecommunication company. It launched a campaign promoting its services by emphasizing the internet as "the medium of the minds"[561]. This commercial features "variously raced, gendered, aged and physically challenged persons chanting in succession and in concert"[562]. The point of the commercial is to show that these differences do not matter online because age, race and genders are erased. But instead of promoting tolerance, it validates the attitude of discriminators in encouraging those discriminated against to keep a low profile. Said otherwise, the internet eradicates the *risk* of discrimination, but does not eradicate the *problem* of discrimination.

> Significantly, this rewriting of the internet as emancipatory, as "freeing" oneself from one's body, also naturalizes racism. The logic framing MCI's commercial reduce to what they can't see, can't hurt you. Since race, gender, age, and infirmities are only skin-deep (or so this logic

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But also Badiou who writes:
Philosophy requires that we throw the dice against the obsession for security, that we interrupt the calculus of life determined by this obsession. But what chance has it to win, except in the name of a value which ordains this risk and gives to it a minimum of consistency and weight? And there again I believe it is vain to imagine that, in the absence of a principle of truth, one can oppose to the calculus of life an existential gamble, which will give rise to something that can be called a liberty.
See: Alain Badiou 'The desire for Philosophy and the Contemporary World', *Lacan.com* (2006)

[560] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.135

[561] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.131

[562] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.131

> goes), moving to a text-based medium makes them— and thus the discrimination that stems from them— disappear. Although "no race" rather than "no racism" leaves open the possibility of racism without physical marker of "race", this formulation effectively conceals individual and institutional responsibility for discrimination, positing discrimination as a problem that the discriminated must solve[563].

What is truly empowered are the network itself, the internet, and virtuality, but not individuals. Here, Chun demonstrates how technologies are the enabler of a social justice, without however endorsing the role of the judge, for even judging would be taking the risk to commit a mistake. And systems of control do not tolerate mistakes. There is no decision to be made, for in eliminating the risk, there is no possibility for the injustice to be enacted. On Chun's view, technology does not solve sociological problems, it distances itself from these problems, ignores or minimizes them. The apparent fluidity of virtuality is only symptomatic of the physical world's own inflexibility. Hence, the internet contributes to prolonging and reinforcing the paradox of freedom, instead of bypassing or abolishing it.

In this respect, the rise of control is the response to the failures of "both liberty and discipline", Chun claims. The passage of freedom from an institutional model to a protocological model corresponds to the individual's progressive disengagement from herself as a responsible being, capable of making decisions and fail. In other words, technologies relieve us from the task we do not want to endorse anymore for the simple reason that we think ourselves not capable of doing so[564] .

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[563] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.132

[564] Alain Badiou summarizes the contention as follows:

> The first problem is that of identity; the second, that of agency. The mind-body problem derives for the most part from the former, and the free will versus determinism debate from the latter. Poststructuralists have concentrated almost exclusively on a critique of the first problem, arguing that there is no solution to the problem of the identity of the subject because the subject has no substantial identity: the illusion of an underlying identity is produced by the very representational mechanism employed by the subject in its effort to grasp its own identity. The same line of argument is also applied to the identity of any entity thus including the subject within the domain of a general ontology (…) As for agency - philosophy's second fundamental problem in the thought of the subject - the consequence of poststructuralists' almost exclusive concentration on the first problem has been that the critics of poststructuralism have had an easy pitch: all they have had to do is to accuse the poststructuralists of robbing the subject of agency: if there is no self-identical subject, then what is the ground for autonomous rational action? This is what lies behind the infamous jibe that poststructuralism leads down a slippery slope to apoliticism.

Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2003) p.4-5

According to Chun, the coupling of freedom and control is philosophically devastating because it generates disinvested individuals on an ethical and moral level; it generates a system in which models of empowerment produce powerless individuals and in which freedom is reduced to the avoidance of danger through the multiplication of regulations.

6.5 INITIATING FREEDOM

Whereas conceptions of control-as-freedom claim that freedom is enabled by power-structures, Chun suggests by the means of Nancy's work, that the very possibility of the existence of power-structures is traversed through and through by freedom.

> Freedom does not produce anything, but only comes to produce itself there (it is not poiesis, but praxis), in the sense that an actor, in order to be the actor he is, produces himself on the stage…Power has an origin, freedom is a beginning. Freedom does not cause coming-to-being, it is an initiality of being. Freedom is what is initially, or (singularly) self-initiating being. Freedom is the existence of the existent as such which means that it is the initiality of its "setting into position".[565]

If freedom never ceases to produce itself, it thus means that it never ceases to be applied, though its application can take different forms and follow unexpected trajectories. One of these trajectories is that of control. However, control is not the natural expression of freedom. It is not its consequence either. Throughout her reading of Nancy, Chun makes it clear that control is not *caused* by freedom.

Societies of control-freedom such as ours are grounded on technologies more than on a consistent politics. In these regimes, individuals are resigned to their fate and it is this resignation that leads them to accept unfreedom as the price to pay in order to be safe. The current paranoid mind-set convinces us that control procedures are

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[565] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, translated by Bridget McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) p.74 *as quoted by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.293

inevitable if we wish to exercise our freedom. Yet, Chun argues that the existence, or the reality, of freedom does not strictly depends on its application, or on physical markers, as it is often the case with Foucault's description of power. Instead, freedom is *nothing*. Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy, Chun agrees to the definition of freedom as transcendental spacing:

> Freedom is that which spaces and singularizes— or which singularizes itself— because it is freedom of being in its withdrawal. Freedom "precedes" in the sense that being cedes before every birth to existence: it withdraws. Freedom is the withdrawal of being, but the withdrawal of being is the nothingness of this being, which is the being of freedom. This is why freedom is not, but it frees being and frees from being, all of which can be rewritten here as: freedom withdraws being and gives relation[566].

Said otherwise, and this is what Chun retains from her reading of Nancy, freedom is apodictic and is grounded in the thrownness of existence; it is not the action but the possibility of the action itself, the same way it is not being, but the possibility of being.

In rejecting the principle of causality between freedom and control, Chun claims that control *is* free because it has been put in place freely. In other words, it has been initiated. The difference between causality and initiality is the same that separates the notion of origin and birth. Arendt argues in *The Human Condition*:

> Without the articulation of natality, we would be doomed to swing forever in the ever-recurring cycle of becoming, then without the faculty to undo what we have done and to control at least partially the processes we have let loose, we would be the victims of an automatic necessity bearing all the marks of the inexorable laws which, according to the natural sciences before our time, were supposed to constitute the outstanding characteristic of natural processes. We have seen before that to mortal beings this natural fatality, though it swings in itself and may be eternal, can only spell doom. If it were true that fatality is the inalienable mark of historical processes, then it would indeed be equally true that everything done in history is doomed[567].

In this respect, Arendt's account of natality escapes any sort of determinism and rather describes it in terms of unpredictability. Natality is presented in *The Human Condition* as an initiative that interrupts; it is the experience of an opening and of a cutting[568].

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[566] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, translated by Bridget McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) p.20 *as quoted by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.292

[567] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) p.246

[568] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) p.247

This is why freedom is before all *nothing* rather than *something*. It is nothing because freedom does not establish any principles of truth. Freedom is not metaphysical precisely because it has no foundation; it is beyond the foundation. Hence, with Chun, we are not confronted with a Kantian model of freedom, precisely because her understanding of freedom is amoral. It means that her conception of freedom does not bear any pre-conception of good and evil. It is for this reason that freedom is dangerous, risky, obscure and unpredictable[569]. Put otherwise, freedom is the experience of abandonment. This is the reason why it cannot be secured.

In sum, Chun argues that technologies entail *narratives* of freedom, rather than actual practices of freedom. To argue that freedom is the outcome of control only worsens the paranoia of the internet as "dark machine of control[570]". To her mind, freedom always slips from control. However, it is not that we should purely dissociate freedom from control or minimize the reality of one to stress the implacability of the other[571]. Instead, we must acknowledge, for a start, that freedom is the possibility of action and decision, not their result.

6.6 KEY POINTS

The pessimism of today stems from a paranoiac attitude, Chun claims, for we confuse what *may* or *may not* happen with what *will* happen. The possibilities offered by new technologies are indeed possibilities, yet we tend to treat these possibilities as facts in overthinking the power of technologies. However, unpredictability plays a key

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[569] Chun writes: "Freedom as initiality, as power, makes freedom both good and evil; the first manifestation of freedom — the withdrawal of being and the furious unleashing— is wickedness. Evil absolutely ruins good— it destroys good before it can occur; it is freedom unleashed against itself. Freedom necessitates a decision: a decision for good is a decision for finitude, a decision to hold back its possibility for devastation; a decision for evil is the letting go of this furious devastation."
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.295

[570] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.2

[571] Chun claims that "rather than simply agreeing with Nancy", she also aims to outline that "his philosophical notion of freedom works by making oppression metaphoric" and is therefore not fully adequate.
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.30

part in technological evolution. It is thus time to come to terms to what she calls a "cybernetic dream based on a technology that perpetuates master-and-slave relations, that reduces freedom to control, language to programs and commands[572]".

In short, the key to liberty shall be found in freedom, not control. One must therefore come to terms with the ideal of safety to embrace the unpredictability of risk instead, understood that risk is the openness to contingency and mistakes. Overall, Chun's work invites us to reflect on our relationship with freedom and more specifically with our blind faith in control. It occurs to me that her claims regarding the paranoia traversing contemporary social circuits possess a Sartrean undertone. Like Sartre's bad faith, she notes that it is our misconception of freedom and our refusal to own up to ourselves as responsible beings (even though this refusal does not make us less responsible) that is at cause, not the situation that we are embedded with. What her work implies and what makes it relevant for this research, is that technology is not the fault, but an alibi. Finally, it is reductive, according to Chun, to view freedom as a mere complement of control, insofar as freedom always exceeds control. Freedom is beyond control because it is beyond representational circuits. It thus cannot be reduced to technological systems of decision-making.

[572] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.297

CONCLUSION
THE POLITICS OF THE SELF AND IDEOLOGIES OF FREEDOM

The Aesthecization of Self and the Necessity to be Free

In this thesis, I took Sartre as a point of departure for two reasons. On one hand, he is famous for articulating selfhood as a project of existence. This approach entails an aesthetic of subjectivation in which one constitutes herself through her actions and subsequently redefines selfhood as the pattern of one's choices and doings. Behind the claim 'existence precedes essence' lies the idea that we are the architects of our existence, of our own self. The second reason is that Sartre locates freedom in the spontaneity of consciousness, which, as a reflective unifying activity, enables one to posit oneself as subject. For Sartre, freedom is both a fact and a goal to be attained; it needs to be recognized, embraced, cultivated and preserved.

In positing the transcendence of the ego, Sartre suggest that there is no inner self, only outer selves. Hence, selfhood is a narrative opened to multiple interpretations from myself and others. In arguing this, Sartre throws selfhood into the domain of the public, for self has no consistency of its own; it is only constructed outwardly. Self is also a social tool that situates me among others.

Sartre also tears apart the idea that self-understanding necessitates an activity of contemplative introspection. Instead, self-understanding requires, as his conception of existential psychoanalysis suggests, a technical exteriorization. The aim is not to discover what constitutes the hidden crux of one's identity, but to clarify the nature of the fundamental project of existence that one has already in some sense understood and undertaken through the course of one's actions. In order to achieve this, one must have recourse to hermeneutical techniques. I have therefore stressed how writing enabled Sartre to fully realise his existential project of becoming an author.

As the key figure of existentialism, Sartre argues that what constitutes a human's essence is their lack of essence. This lack deprives human beings of a fixed nature and is, in this respect, constitutive of their ontological freedom. Yet this freedom is also a burden, for humans are condemned to ek-sist, that is, to live outside themselves. This stance constitutes another reason for me choosing Sartre as a starting point of reference. Indeed, the ontological lack triggers the need to exteriorize what is precisely missing, namely, the ego. The lack is the quasi-cause of self, the same way the lack is the quasi-cause of technics in Stiegler's work. This is why, according to Sartre, the notion of selfhood sounds so seductive for individuals as it crystalizes one's desire for self-coincidence. Self articulates a narrative in which I can fully posit myself as a free and responsible being. As such, it is essential to the individuation process.

I have argued that Sartre elaborates, in his half-philosophical half-autobiographical piece, *Words*, a hermeneutics of the self that can be, in retrospect, read as Foucauldian in many key respects. I have also argued that the late Foucault presents continuities with its predecessor when abandoning the structuralist semantics to put subjectivity at the center of his concern, without relinquishing his earlier assumptions on the true nature of power. Foucault's input is to claim that power is always bio-power in the sense that it is exerted upon living beings. Though embodied in institutions, titles or objects, power cannot be simply abstracted; it demands to be applied. Bio-power has emerged conjointly with capitalism and the need to produce useful bodies. What Foucault demonstrates could be summarized as follows: where there is power there is freedom. But also and most importantly; where there is power there are subjects, precisely because power can only be enacted upon free individuals. On one hand, we are the products of power relations, on the other hand, we produce these power relations, which means that we are accountable for the circuits of power we are embedded in. For Chun, such an assumption only precipitates the ideological conflation of control and freedom that characterizes our age, insofar as it remains evident that for Foucault, the very possibility of freedom is enabled by power relations and not the reverse. Whereas Sartre's later philosophy perpetuates a (perhaps simplistic) Marxist account of power and freedom, of which Foucault was himself very

critical, Sartre's reluctance to merge power and freedom together as co-expansive elements of the social sphere deserves appraisal. Sartre's defence of freedom as an existential necessity, though perceived as naive and overly optimistic, reveals itself to be useful to combat the current paranoia of control pinpointed by Chun and into which, I contend, Stiegler falls.

Sartre conceives the self primarily, though not exclusively, as an imaginary object of consciousness, whereas Foucault stresses that the self is a socio-political construct and gives a bigger emphasis on practices of self-formation such as his reading of care suggests. Stiegler goes further in his conception of selfhood. Not only is self an imaginary object or the product of social forces, it is always preceded by technics.

Indeed, whereas Sartre starts with consciousness and Foucault with power relations, Stiegler reshuffles the cards and argues that the individuation process is always already technical. Stiegler never mentions Sartre as a possible influence, despite the work of both being inscribed in the same philosophical lineage. As Sartre before, Stiegler draws on Heidegger and Husserl. From Heidegger, both theorists take up the idea of incompleteness of Being, which translates as ontological lack; a lack around which the issue of responsibility is articulated in terms of *zu-sein* (to-be). From the early Husserl, both argue for the intentionality of consciousness and present the latter as transcendental. Yet, they take their distance with the word transcendental, hence expressing a desire to move away from the Kantian legacy. Sartre prefers to coin consciousness as spontaneous, whereas Stiegler affirms that consciousness emerges from the empirical ground-(lessness) of technics, hereby rejecting the possibility of pure transcendentality.

Foucault argues that it is because power relations are inevitable, that one must take care of oneself in one way or another. Drawing on Foucault, Stiegler proposes to reactivate techniques of care as an alternative to current forms of power, which are not exerted on the living (*bios*), but on consciousness (*psyche*). In that sense, biopower has evolved into psychopower, claims Stiegler. The same way Foucault declares that we are consenting to power relations, Stiegler's views on technics suggests that we are

not the mere toys of technologies. Instead, we are complicit in the future these technologies are designing for us. On the other hand, we are not the master of this process either. This refusal to apprehend technologies through the prism of mastery is crucial here, because Stiegler's work is not turned towards a discursivity of freedom and liberation, but autonomy and relation. Like Sartre, Stiegler locates freedom in consciousness, yet, one cannot merely conflate Stiegler's understanding of freedom with Sartre's. For Sartre, the whole point of developing one's fundamental project of existence is to be capable to transcend one's initial situation; in other words, freedom is a matter of *breaking* bonds. Conversely, the exercise of freedom implies for Foucault and Stiegler the developing of relations; an input that, according to Chun, has led to the contemporary belief that more freedom equals more connections.

The first part of the thesis claimed overall that reading Stiegler through Sartre's and Foucault's lens enables us to gain a better understanding of the true issues at stake within the politics of consciousness that Stiegler intends to develop in response to the loss of the feeling of existing.

1) Selfhood, as I have said, is a tool that enables Sartre to problematize the combined issues of freedom and responsibility. It is because we are free to construct ourselves that we are responsible for who we are becoming. We exist as free agents, therefore we are accountable for our actions. This stance resonates once again with Stiegler for whom the dissolution of selfhood is symptomatic of the dissolution of responsibility and hence, of our freedom. To reinvigorate responsibility, that is, political freedom, necessarily implies the reinvigoration of a sense of self.

2) While Stiegler draws his reading of care from Foucault, he broadens the issue of stationery bio-power, geared towards the normalisation of bodies, and introduces a new problematic, which is that of psychopower, characteristic of the digital age, and geared towards the standardization of

> flows of consciousness. Foucault made of the body the main site of power and therefore, the main interface of care. Conversely, Stiegler suggests that it is now consciousness that constitutes the object of political and commercial targeting. In this respect, it is primarily (but not exclusively) consciousness that we must take care of.

Narratives of Freedom in the Age of New Media:

I have suggested that Stiegler's politics of care is dangerous insofar as it runs the risk of destroying what it aims to protect, namely, freedom. Now is the time to clarify my statement under the light of the themes covered with Turkle, Galloway and Chun. Indeed, I have claimed that Stiegler's questionable account of care lies in his blind faith in the reality of control as the grounding principle of new media. As such, the second part of the thesis proposed to reflect on what could have possibly fostered this paranoia.

To summarise briefly, I compared Stiegler's approach to Sherry Turkle's. I put the stress on the effect of technology in the ontological and psychological development of the human and explained that while Turkle and Stiegler follow different paths, they come to broadly the same conclusion: redefining of the technological framework needs to be at the center of our political concern. Stiegler's willingness to develop a new political economy in which care would be at the center is not groundless and his use of N. Katharine Hayles' work gives us evidence of the (potentially) disastrous effects of new technologies on the formation of attention. But when I moved on to consider Galloway's insights on new media, I intended to show that technology is not just a homogenising force aimed at the concretization and the sustaining of negentropy, and that there is in technology a furious dimension, the same way that there is an opaque dimension that resists transparent communication. Technologies resist meaning, they resist the all too rational process of grammatization. I believe that one way to deconstruct the paranoid narrative deployed by Stiegler who comes to apprehend

technology in terms of either good or bad influencers in the psychic and collective development of individuals would be to take into account the elusive character of technology in relation to signification. In this sense, technology does not only belong to the discursive, that is, to the politics of self-writing, but to something else, something more, which Galloway terms 'ex-communication' when referring to media standing at the limit of traditional hermeneutics. It is certainly a path that should be further investigated if one does not wish to see control everywhere. This fear of total control and total surveillance is what the last chapter on Chun intended to challenge.

Stiegler's account of psychopower is paranoid, for it assumes from the outset the political reality of unfreedom and portrays the current socio-digital environment as panoptical. Though Stiegler nuances his thoughts on multiple occasions, especially during interviews, his tone grows more and more alarmist throughout the years. Psychopower signals not only the decline of culture, but of democracy. To reintroduce care constitutes a political emergency. This leads Stiegler to pledge for a return to old institutions as careful agents of individuation. Yet, as I have underlined in the third chapter, this approach stands in contradiction with Foucault insofar as the latter precisely criticized institutions for their lack of care. Hence, one must not confuse disciplinary subjection with careful subjectivation. Overall, Stiegler considers psychopower to be mainly (but not only) a technological problem to which he proposes several technological solutions. As I have underlined, Stiegler believes national education to be a desirable system of metacare. Indeed, the key element of Stiegler's politics of care is that of the necessity to be *educated.* How does this translate to the age of new media when Stiegler mainly refers to the institutions of the Third French republic? One of his suggestions is to teach students computer programming in order to liberate them from their status of mere consumers and transform them into responsible users capable of understanding the functioning of networks and protocols. For Chun, this is a mistake insofar as one cannot reduce the political problem of freedom to a mere technological issue. She has explained for example how erasing racist contents online does not erase the actual problem of racism, hence showing that a technological solution (blocking a website for example) does not solve a political issue (insofar as the content will likely to reappear elsewhere in another form). But on a larger scale, Stiegler's account of psychopower blames technologies less than the

economic interests they articulate. In the case of new media, Stiegler argues that the progressive commercialisation of the internet that started in mid 1990's contributed largely to the expansion of psychopower, earlier initiated by radio and television. As such, it is crucial, according to him, to favour open source technologies that foster meaningful processes of individuation. Put otherwise, one must develop an economy of contribution geared towards the circulation of knowledge. An example of this endeavour would be Wikipedia[573] to which Stiegler shows sympathy. Put more broadly, it is the marketization and privatization of the internet that worries Stiegler[574], for it facilitates control and surveillance, and more broadly, the exploitation of online activities for commercial purposes. Where does Stiegler's trust in open-source originate and does it really ensure freedom?

According to Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, this trust in public structures stems from the assumption that what is *public* is *open* and therefore *free*. But the correlation between the three is not self-evident and is itself the product of historical misconceptions regarding new media. Chun thus explains that it is most notably the branding of cyberspace as a space for freedom that has affected the development of the Internet as a network of control. Our conception of new media has moved from a utopian narrative of freedom revolving around the notion of *space*, to a dystopian narrative of control to which *network* is the key. In other words, we seem to have passed from one extreme to another, from one excess to its exact excessive reverse. Yet, the two are not antithetical or antinomic. In fact, both ideologies feed one another and are equally dangerous for the implementation of democratic freedom, Chun tells us. While I have stressed the dangers of ideologies[575] of control, I would like in this conclusion to put the emphasis on ideologies of freedom, bearing in mind that the two remain co-related.

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[573] Bernard Stiegler, *L'emploi est mort, vive le travail ! Entretien avec Ariel Kyrou* (Paris : Mille et une nuits, 2015) p.77

[574] Bernard Stiegler, *L'emploi est mort, vive le travail ! Entretien avec Ariel Kyrou* (Paris : Mille et une nuits, 2015) p.40-41

[575] For the sake of this conclusion, I will limit my understanding of ideology as being a false representation.

a) Freedom as volitional mobility

The mystification of the cyberspace as a space of freedom started in the late 1980's and early 1990's and was epitomized by the work of Turkle on *The Second Self* among numerous others. I have said that her work could appear outdated and is yet symptomatic of our relationship with computing devices as the mirror of ourselves and spaces for infinite self-recreation and boundless exploration. In this respect, the virtual becomes a space in which one make the experience of unlimited freedom. The fact that, at the time, cyberspace was public and owned by the government, left users with greater liberties. The latter was an explorer, a *flâneur*, wandering in a virtual world where anything was possible. This world appeared as an alternative to mainstream media such as radio and television, accused of being perverted by economic interests. Cyberspace offered a brand-new space, free because apparently neutral and boundless. Freed from her body, her social background, her race and her gender, the user could indeed pretend to be anyone. This is at least what Sherry Turkle used to argue, while defending cyberspace for its potential therapeutical virtues. Online gaming, she said, enabled users to either tame their bad temper or release their frustration. For all these reasons, it functions as a utopia, for it is a perfect space of freedom in which the user can herself, reinvent herself and play with her image.

According to Chun, Turkle's optimism obfuscated the reality of cyberspace, insofar as it is less driven by actual freedom than by its ideology. Cyberspace, Chun argues, offers a narrative of freedom revolving around notions of mobility and accessibility. She thus raises to our attention the fact that many of cyberspace's semantics echo nautical navigation and hence perpetuate, in their own way, the dream of the explorer — or the pirate — on his boat ready to discover new lands. Cyberspace, she adds, proffers also a narrative of supreme agency through the figures of the *explorer* and/or the *user*, for its interfaces (and this is still the case today) induce the feeling that everything is searchable, findable and orderable *on demand* and that the computing machine only respond to these demands. Unfortunately, this hardly corresponds to the reality of cyberspace. First of all, cyberspace cannot offer a space for navigation, for the good reason that there is no such thing as virtual space, strictly speaking. To believe that one can experience online a parallel world in which one can

live a parallel life is a false conception. Lev Manovich argues for example that there is no continuous and coherent space in cyberspace, only a collection of discrete objects, superimposed and yet unrelated to each other:

> In view of this, commonly expressed arguments that 3D computer graphics send us back to Renaissance perspectivalism, and, therefore, from the viewpoint of twentieth-century abstraction, should be considered regressive, turn out to be groundless. If we are to apply the evolutionary paradigm of Panofsky to the history of virtual computer space, it has not even achieved its Renaissance yet. It is still on the level of Ancient Greece, which could not conceive of space as a totality[576].

The notion of cyberspace was certainly seductive for the user who was offered the possibility to wander endlessly in a world in which he is the master. That too, is erroneous. The figure of the empowered and invulnerable user is a myth. It perpetuates the fantasy of an unfailing global system subordinated to the will of a knowing and responsible subject that is fully in control of her actions. Computers constantly wander and produces information without the user's consent, Chun argues; they crash and erase contents by mistake. But this vulnerability was hardly taken into account in the narrative of cyberspace which instead was branded as the mass medium of individual freedom and empowerment.

b) Between transparency and opacity

The mystification of cyberspace as a space of unlimited freedom is directly related to its portrayal as a space where *anything is possible*, hence perpetuating the belief that the user fully controls the machine and that the machine only *does* what the user *wants*. But to assume this is to posit a unilateral correspondence/equivalence between the user and the computer. In other words, it is to suggest that computing machines are the mirror of the human and that their main function is to *reflect back* on the user's actions, which are themselves the reflection of the user's desires. This leads us back to Turkle and her portraying of computers in terms of the second self. I have stressed that Turkle, like Stiegler, ties technologies to the subjective experience, either

[576] Lev Manovich, '1.3: The Aesthetics of Virtual Worlds: Report From Los Angeles', *CTheory* (1996): 5-22.

as its passive medium of expression or its necessary condition and horizon. In this respect, I explained that both understand computing machines/technologies through their mirroring functions, even though they metaphorized the mirror in different terms.

Stiegler draws on Lacan and Leroi-Gourhan's instrumental maieutics and states that technics *constitutes* subjective life. Turkle's account of the mirror proposes, on the other hand, to revisit the figure of Narcissus and utopian spaces. She presents the relation between humans and machines essentially as *mimetic*. The point of Turkle's investigations is to show how computers affect the psychological development of individuals, whereas Stiegler is more concerned about the impact of technologies on an ontological level. Yet their approach, I believe, does not allow technologies — and in this case, cyberspace or internet — to be anything more than their contents. In any case, it does not allow the user of these technologies to be anything else than the contents she browses. In short, I contend that the perversity of their approach is to limit both the human to technologies and technologies to the human. Turkle portrays the user as a knowing, rational, self-aware and responsible subject whose actions in front of a screen are the reflection of the user's identity and which hence assumes a correspondence between the two.

Stiegler, for his part, often reduces the user to a vulnerable recipient of technological activity. This is especially the case in his examining of one of Canal J's advertising campaigns to which he concludes, quite vigorously, that such advertising diverts primary identification and captures the attention of young minds[577]. Put more bluntly, the exposure to debilitating contents debilitates individuals. In this respect, Stiegler contends that there is an *equivalence* between acting and desiring, insofar as he perceives regressive identification to be the fetishization of brands and commodities. This would mean, in other words, that me wearing a Disney T-shirt necessarily translates as me identifying with the corporation. But this is to be oblivious to the possible gratuity, meaninglessness and absurdity of one's gesture.

[577] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) p. 9

Chun tackles the issue with the example of cyber pornography to criticize this confusion between content, medium and the nature of human mind. According to her, we forget that "there is an important gap between download and identity, between looking and acting[578]". As such, "the thrill of downloading so-called deviant pornography stems from both the content and the very act of searching and downloading 'blasphemous knowledge'"[579]. It may not mean anything more than that. Put otherwise, the issue is not to interrogate if what I do corresponds to or makes me who I am or if what I see, click on, download, wear, or possess should be conflated with my personality. Instead, it is to wonder if *everything* I do corresponds to or makes me who I am and if *everything* I see, click on, download, wear, or possess should be conflated with my personality. Understanding technology either as the psychological representation or the ontological extension of the human condemns technology to be in a relation of correspondence or equivalence with the human. It is to restrict one's understanding of technology as mere materialization of one's desires, that are either good or bad, productive or destructive, healthy or poisonous, wise or stupid, acceptable or unacceptable, normal or deviant. The mistake is to identify the message with the medium and to tie technology with the necessity of meaning; it is also to assume that their effect is dependent on their contents, that is, on the logos they deploy, articulate or promote. The chapter on Galloway and his work on *Excommunication* intended to deconstruct, or at least interrogate, Stiegler's McLuhan-esque conflation of the medium with the message in order to stress that technologies not only distort the message, but also challenge the very ideal of "communication that proceeds in an orderly fashion, with little or no misunderstanding, with no harassment or irrationality"[580]. In short, technologies are deceptive, they fail and fail *us* on a regular basis. Besides, they are not mere communication tools destined to reveal or produce fundamental truths about ourselves. Instead, they *play* with these truths. According to Chun, one should accept this opacity and indeterminacy in order to better accept the vulnerability of freedom, which always entail risks, errors and misunderstanding.

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[578] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.84

[579] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.84

[580] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.98

c) Open-source and Privatization

The commercialization of what became the *Internet* at the end of 1990's by telecommunication corporations impacted seriously upon the aura of the Internet as a utopian space of freedom by 1) implementing security procedures that led to the assumption that greater freedom implies greater safety as its necessary condition, and 2) by privatizing the virtual field. According to Chun, the idealization of *cyberspace* as a boundless space of freedom, in contrast with the progressive depreciation of the *internet* [581] — a network technology which is controlled by economic interests —has led to the paranoid assumption that one is less free in the current media due to the intrusive presence of corporations and online advertising. She however tells us that, while cyberspace may have been more free in the sense that it was not controlled, hence less secured, its use was limited to a small number of people, themselves often marginalized as nerds. In that sense, cyberspace was a space of unlimited freedom for a limited number of people. Conversely, we forget that the privatization of the internet has engendered its democratization, though it is also true that it has potentially engendered more control. The question is: should we defend this model of freedom which hardly is democratic? For Chun, the issue deserves our full attention as the idealization of cyberspace as a space of freedom still subsists nowadays and lies on false representations.

In sum, the cyberspace of the 1990's was perhaps public, but reserved to experts, while contemporary networks are private, but accessible to everyone. This contention between public and private as the illustration of the more profound antagonism between freedom and control is, according to Chun, not the right way to approach the political significance of new media; public does not equal freedom and private ownership does not necessarily involve actual control. Hence, to critique the

[581] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.2

internet as a whole for being under the grip of capitalism, as Stiegler does, only reinforces the paranoiac account of the internet as a gigantic network of control, while the promoting of open-source technologies, though interesting, is not the ultimate guarantee for democratic freedom and may in fact, reinforce the reality of control. In this respect, it is worth examining Lessig's criticisms in *Code: And Other Laws of Cyberspace*. Lessig argues that the transformation of the internet into a giant shopping mall and the private ownership of codes are engendering an environment of perfect control. The argument is simple: the privatization of codes threatens democracy for if they are *owned* they are *controlled*. Hence, the only way to ensure democracy is to free internet from ownership and favour open-source. According to Chun, this open-source dynamic entails at its core a dangerous politics of shared transparency insofar as a code that is not owned means that it belongs to a public license. And if it is public, tells us Chun, it also means that "others are free to use this code" and "they too must make their source code available[582]". This reciprocal availability of information is at the core of the open-source model. Chun argues in this respect that the open-source ideology does not erase control, but displaces it, for freedom only flourishes through a system of visibility in which everyone is seen by everyone, hence reproducing a panoptical structure of control one tried initially to avoid. She thus states:

> With Jeremy Bentham-esque optimism, Lessig assumes that readability ensures democracy (those who can read the code will read it and a good consensus will emerge) and that open means public, open means common. Also like Bentham, Lessig makes self-conscious control — the internalization of control — the goal (although unlike Bentham, self-conscious control leads to greater freedom)[583].

The same criticism, I believe, could be applied to Stiegler's computational politics which, as I have mentionned, also favour open-source structures of knowledge, public contributions and share of information.

In short, the historical idealization of freedom fostered the current paranoia of control in which one is trapped into a panoptical account of the social, that is, subjected to an electronic/digital gaze that sees and records everything. It is not enough to seek

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[582] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.68

[583] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.62

freedom, one must deconstruct control in order to break the poisonous dynamic between the two. In this respect, Galloway proposed an interesting perspective in arguing that freedom and control are not opposites but two sides of the same coin. He thus argues that it is control that produces freedom so that the very possibility of technological innovation, cherished by Stiegler for example, depends and is allowed by norms and procedures. Galloway does not present innovation as an alternative to control; it is its outcome. This the reason why one should not work against protocol but work through it. In this respect, Galloway repeats the Foucauldian gesture in reactivating a discourse of resistance, whereas Stiegler believes in reinvention. But arguing for the co-dependence and co-expansivity of control and freedom is not enough to deconstruct the paranoia of control, even though it desacralizes the ideal of pure or unlimited freedom. If it is not enough, I contend, it is because it still confines us in a paranoid mind-set in which control is everywhere. To reduce freedom into a mere effect of procedures of control is to portray a cynical reality where freedom is an illusion, whereas control is a reality. As I have argued in the last chapter, control is far from being a certainty; it is simply a possibility. The rumours of the internet being a giant system of control and surveillance are not groundless, though. It would be wrong to affirm that cookies are not tracking online activities for example. Yet, one forgets that this automated form of control is not *volitional*. The presence of systems of control does not necessarily imply the actuality of a culture of control. As Chun explains, the internet is often viewed as big archival monster, but it stores as much information as it destroys data. It is also too vast to enable everyone to be seen at the same time. Though its structure belongs to the visible, one is only seen *if* someone is looking. Chun argues that the possibility of someone getting access to someone else's files is constitutive of this medium, but it is not a fact. This conflation between the two is symptomatic of the paranoia of control she intends to describe and it is this paranoia that is dangerous for it takes the risk of accomplishing the reverse it aimed to do; entrapping us in a system of control instead of freeing us.

> Those aware of and concerned with tracking treat possibility as fact, and assume that all their electronic data transfers are recorded and analyzed—an assumption that flies in the face of their everyday experience with crashing computers, undelivered e-mail messages, and inaccessible Web sites. They therefore encrypt their messages, guaranteeing that their messages will be recorded[584].

[584] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.84-85

This tells us two things. First of all, it tells us that it is the paranoia of control and not the actuality of control that produces more control. Second, it shows us that treating control as a technological problem instead as a pathological issue regarding one's own relation to power, is insufficient and deserves a serious and profound engagement with one's political conception of freedom. I believe that Stiegler's project is questionable for these precise reasons. His eagerness to defend the old institutions of the Third Republic and his conflating of the Ancient ethics of care with its disciplinary counterpart appears to me philosophically suspicious as I hardly see how a disciplinary model of control can succeed in freeing us from control. One should not assume the certainty of control, but its uncertainty, Chun argues. And it is on that ground that Galloway's understanding of the network as a delicate dance of control and freedom is not satisfying. It is crucial, she says, to understand new media from the perspective of their vulnerabilities, their failures and repeated mistakes. On this last issue, Galloway and Chun seem to agree. Indeed, the latter salutes Galloway for turning "to tactical media as an effective means of exploiting the flaws in protological and proprietary command and control"[585]. In this respect, new media should not merely be understood as a rational and infallible system copying or fulfilling a certain ideal of the human mind. Instead, they should be understood in virtue of their indeterminacy and opacity.

Key points:

The aim of this work was to critically examine the relevance of Stiegler's politics of care, as formulated, in particular, in his controversial piece *Taking of Care and the Generations*. The first part of the thesis intended to unpack Stiegler's argument through its implicit resonance with the Sartrean discourse and its explicit relation with Foucault. The second part challenged Stiegler's narrative of psychopower, the effects of which I consider to be overestimated by their author. It is interesting to note in this respect that "despite his critique of Plato's attitude toward technics, he frequently repeats the *Phaedrus*'s line about writing as the 'production of forgetfulness' (274a),

[585] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2006) p.70

reworking it into a critique of the anaesthetising gadgetry of the twenty-first century. Stiegler does indeed share his concerns over the dangers of displacing live thought into the dead matter of technics (writing)"[586], fearing through the popularization of smartphones the eroding of human knowledge. My intention was to counterbalance his pessimism regarding digital culture, without discarding the virtues of his approach in which this critique of new media is only one side of the story. Stiegler is still promoting creativity and invention. It would be wrong to simply accuse him of wishing to revive old institutions. Stiegler is concerned about creating healthier forms of individuation; a project which can only be achieved through technics.

Following Stiegler on this, my thesis defends the political necessity of developing an ethics of care in the digital age. Like him, I argue that the individual's participation in cultural becoming — through the active use of technics — should be encouraged if one aims to combat the loss of the feeling of existing. However, I claim that Stiegler's argument is flawed with paranoia and a reactionary attitude towards new technologies that runs the risk of perpetuating misconceptions regarding power and freedom in general.

In my point of view, Sartre's contributions enable us to understand the political significance of consciousness insofar as it is viewed as the main site of freedom and is essential to the process of individuation. As suggested in the introduction, selfhood is a feeling rather than a state of being; it thus depends on consciousness and the cultivating of self-awareness. Foucault, on the other hand, clarifies freedom as a key narrative to the expansion of power. But, as I have explained, this may have precipitated us to the paranoia of control I note in Stiegler's account of technologies of psychopower. It is on these grounds that I consider it crucial to return to Sartre's existentialist model of freedom in which humans are spontaneously free and therefore always capable of reinventing themselves. Moreover, it is essential to view freedom as the sole condition of its foundation[587], rather than as the cynical outcome of power relations, for it is the only way, I believe, one can hope to instill in the individual a

[586] Christina Howells and Gerald Moore, 'Introduction: Philosophy – The Repression of Technics', in *Stiegler and Technics*, ed. by Christina Howells and Gerald Moore (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) pp.11-12

sense of responsibility instead of hopelessness. This quest for responsibility is precisely what Stiegler's politics of care, as discussed in *Taking of Youth and the Generations*, is getting at. Yet, in my viewpoint, his argument would gain in depth and intelligibility by directly engaging with Sartre and not simply with Foucault. This is this gap that my thesis intended to initially cover.

While I do not take issue with Stiegler's account of the existential crisis we are embedded within, I express clear reserves regarding his approach of new media which he essentially views through the lens of psychopower. For Stiegler, the ontological groundlessness of the human *qua* technical being is a mixed blessing, for it is both the condition of our freedom and the very reason of our vulnerability towards the technological environment. It is this very default of being, according to Stiegler, that enables us to act out in order to reinvent our future. Yet, if such ontological groundlessness resonates with the indeterminacy of our becoming, one may be perplexed why systems of control fail to truly capture us and why our relationship with technologies is anything but transparent or self-evident. Stiegler, unfortunately, does not explore this possibility.

Stiegler's account, though theoretically enlightening, I argue, suffers from a lack of empirical engagement with the field he intends to criticize. It is true that in Stiegler's work, technics is a rather broad and abstract concept that equally refers to artefacts, craftsmanship, modern technology electronics and contemporary computing devices. One could argue that it is not Stiegler's intention to be caught in empirical considerations for he does not wish to reduce technics to a set of specific objects and instruments. After all, Stiegler is a philosopher of technology, not a media archeologist. His use of Bertrand Gilles and Gilbert Simondon, both historians of technology, and the anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan, is in fact quite eloquent; technics is an empirico-transcendental individuating process which traverses (but is not limited to) human life. In other words, technics designates a character, a tendency, an overall dynamic, more than an actual object. And this is what allow Stiegler to be elusive. But this lack of concrete engagement with new media is not without consequences, for it condemns Stiegler's insight of new media culture to be either outdated, partially misinformed, or perhaps erroneous. It is in these commun

misconceptions, these approximations, I suggest, that his paranoid account of digital power has its roots. One way to bypass this difficulty would be to actively link Stiegler's project within the discipline of new media in order to reflect more adequately to our actual relationship with technologies. This is what I intended to do through a discussion with Turkle, Galloway and Chun. To be fair, Stiegler is not foreign to the field, as can attest his work on *Digital Studies: organologies des savoirs et technologies de la connaissance* to which Galloway himself contributed. What's more, his research on the deficit of attention in relation to neuroscience[588] demonstrates an interest towards empirical studies. I only suggest that such direction should be pushed further in order to fully meet its promise, instead of being a mere pretext to draw general conclusions about new media culture and its supposedly intrinsic strategies of control and surveillance.

[588] During his 2012 doctoral seminar series at the École de philosophie d'Epineuil-le-Fleuriel, Stiegler discussed indeed the relation between technics and the brain, and offered by these means an engagement with the work of Catherine Malabou.

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